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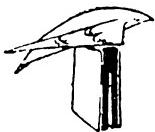
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STORM OVER THE RUHR

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BY

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P A R T I

CHAPTER I

IT was late in the afternoon of a cold, cloudy day in March. In the yards of the grey, squalid, tottering rows of houses swarms of noisy children played and squabbled. One gang of youngsters ran along the streets, armed themselves with stones, slipped with a nimbleness born of long practice between the rushing motor lorries and sprang round the corners of the houses—playing at war.

Tenement No. 35 was one of the oldest houses in the street. The whole row, except for a few ruined cottages, was the property of the Friedrich-Ernestine Colliery. The only way in which the house might be distinguished from its neighbours was that it was squeezed a foot further out in front. There also, on the stairs and in the entrance hall, which were in perpetual darkness, the noise of the children could be heard. Between their cries sounded the monotonous thud, thud of the handle of the washing machine as Frau Naumann, on the first floor, swung it vigorously to and fro with tireless arms.

A mountain of working clothes, bed-linen, babies' things and other washing lay in a pile before the steaming wash-tub and made the bad air yet more intolerable. On this mound of washing sprawled a baby, a regular little rogue, round as a bullet, wearing wet knickers, who tugged at her skirt and prattled to her. “Yes, yes, Baby, go and play, Hermie,” she replied, almost singing the words in time to her work, pulling the handle to and fro without intermission so that it even shook the drying loft.

From the yard rang the sound of an axe. Naumann was

splitting into small pieces some waste wood which he had brought with him under his coat from the mine. Lisa, the Naumanns' ten-year-old daughter, came up with her pinafore full of firewood.

"Dad's cut up enough for a whole year," she laughed gaily.

"We'll need it, child," said Frau Naumann, "if it gets frosty again."

"Or if it snows," said Lisa in an experienced way. She disappeared into the kitchen with the wood. Warmer air, reeking of cabbage and potatoes, came through the opened door. The children on the staircase smelt it.

"Mother," called up one of them, "will you soon be ready?"

"Yes, soon," called back Frau Naumann and stuffed a fresh lot of washing into the tub.

"I'm hungry." "So am I."

They came rushing up the stairs.

"Will dinner be ready directly?"

"Yes, in a minute."

The hungry children flocked round their mother like chickens round a hen. "Lisa," she called to the kitchen.

"What is it?" Out looked Lisa's merry face.

"Serve out the dinner; you see, these gluttons are giving me no peace."

"Wait till Dad comes up."

"Dad!" The children rushed down the stairs.

Presently up the stairs clattered Naumann in his wooden shoes. The children came shouting behind him. Each brought a bit of the split wood under their arm.

"Are you ready?" asked his wife.

"Yes; hope that'll last till the spring," he growled and spat tobacco juice into the ash-pail which stood in the corner of the hall.

"That's all right; now Lisa can dish up," said Frau Naumann and turned anew to her washing. "Take Hermie away," she called to Lisa in the full swing of her work.

Lisa came back and took the little one, who began to squeal, from the heap of washing.

"Come, you little mudlark!" The baby squealed louder. Lisa held him from her. "Look there, he's wet himself again."

Frau Naumann laughed. "You can send the kid stark naked into the frost; he won't mind!"

She patted the squealing child on his backside, which was red with cold, and beamed all over her face. "Take him in now, Lisa, and fill his tummy."

Then what a chattering and squabbling began inside! In between was heard the soothing voice of Lisa: "Don't make so much noise, you'll all get some."

"But the plate full!" "Mine full too, Lisa!" "I can eat the whole pot full!" cried seven-year-old Karl. "I can eat two pots full!"

"Ooh, you," laughed eight-year-old Marie; "you'd bust!"

"Be quiet, you chatterers," growled Naumann angrily. "Eat and shut up!"

Things got quieter. Father was respected when he got surly.

Naumann was a maintenance man in District No. 5 of the Friedrich-Ernestine Colliery. Nearly all the men in the tenement were employed there as hewers or butties. All except old Martin Kreusat, who was an invalid. He lived one story higher, on the second floor. There were more or less friendly relations between the Naumanns and the Kreusats. If the women met one another on the staircase or in the yard they exchanged opinions and talked about their goats and hens. However, they avoided visiting one another in their homes, Frau Kreusat because she could not stand the noise of the children, and Frau Naumann because she had no time for such civilities. She had her hands full up with work all day.

Frau Kreusat now came to the stairs with a saucepan.

"It's a hard frost."

Frau Naumann, who was sweating, passed her clenched fist over her dripping face. "Yes, it always goes from one extreme to another; that's the way of it. You either suffocate in this hole from heat or else you freeze like a dog."

"A touch of frost does no harm to my old man with his asthma. He is gone to the doctor again."

"What's the matter with him?" asked Frau Naumann as she wrung the water from the clothes.

"Don't know. He's been getting hoarser for three weeks. And it doesn't go away either. His breathing is so bad."

Frau Naumann threw some clothes which she had just wrung out on the ever-growing heap which lay on the right of the wash-tub. "The poor devils will all die in that damned sewer of a pit. What has my man got out of it? Just a pair of pants and a jacket! You have to go on working till there's nothing left of you, and then you can lie in the stable, and devil a bit of notice is taken of you."

She would gladly have given her heart a longer airing, but Frau Kreusat leant over the bannisters, listened and said, gripping her saucepan, "I must go upstairs, my old bear's come in. He's a trial, I can tell you." She tripped swiftly up the staircase and, when she arrived at the top, leant over the bannisters and looked down to see if Martin Kreusat was coming up.

"Damn!" groaned Martin from the first floor.

"Aren't things going well, Herr Kreusat?" asked Frau Naumann.

"The fellow has forbidden me to smoke, devil take him. Now I can take a rest for the first time."

He panted and went on upstairs. Frau Kreusat ran into the room to see to the fire. He had a fit of coughing.

Martin came in. He was tall, about a head taller than his wife. She looked at him anxiously. "Well, what does the doctor say?" she asked.

"What should he say? My throat has gone wrong. I am not to smoke. The devil take him, the cur!"

She peeled off his woollen scarf and overcoat. "Calm yourself. You'll just have to make the best of it." He looked at her angrily. "I know that without you telling me." She was silent and busied herself with the fire.

"I've got to go for walks and get some fresh air and give up smoking."

"You squat here where it's warm," said Frau Kreusat and threw a couple of shovelsful of coal on the fire.

Martin Kreusat staggered to the fire and sat down shivering on the little seat near the stove. The wind blew down the chimney and a shower of sparks came through the stove door into the room. Martin swallowed some of the dense smoke and had another fit of coughing.

"In a few weeks you will be able to go with a hoe into the field," said Frau Kreusat. "That will be better than sticking in this stinking hole."

"In a few weeks you'll have me somewhere else."

She looked at him with misgiving. "Don't talk nonsense, Martin; you'll be a new man when the sun shines again."

Martin had another fit of coughing instead of answering, and spat into the coalbox, his face swollen with the effort.

"The sun"—he gave a husky laugh—"that won't help me any more.

Frau Kreusat was listening. She heard the loud voice of Frau Naumann talking to someone. "The boy is coming." She quickly struck a match and lit the smoky oil lamp.

The door groaned on its hinges; Franz Kreusat, a tall youth, entered the kitchen. In spite of the cold, he was only wearing a short tweed jacket with his shirt open at the neck.

"Hello, it's a bit warmer in here," he laughed and tugged the cap from his tousled head. He grabbed his mother's face with both hands. "Here are cold paws for you, eh?"

"But boy," she screamed, "have you no sense? Will

you never learn to dress yourself properly till you catch something ? ”

“ Don’t scold, old lady ; I shan’t catch cold from a little puff of March wind,” he laughed. “ Make some coffee ; that’s the best remedy for colds, rheumatics and ‘flu.’ ”

He pulled a pipe out of his jacket, filled it with tobacco and lit it from the hearth with a paper spill. He did not notice the look of envy on the old man’s face.

“ What does the doctor say ? ” he asked as he smoked his pipe. Martin muttered something unintelligible. He turned his face away so as not to see the lad puffing his pipe. Frau Kreusat almost dropped her saucepan with dismay. “ Now, isn’t the lad clever ! ”

Franz laughed good-naturedly. “ Don’t pull such a disagreeable face, Dad ? ”

“ You have got a smart tongue, you impudent pup ! ”

Frau Kreusat interrupted them. “ Come, boy, drink your coffee.” She pulled him by his sleeve to the table.

“ Stop that chattering ! ” she added. “ He has been forbidden his pipe, and now you smoke just under his nose ! ”

Franz put his pipe away and sipped the steaming beverage. “ Come to short commons again ? ” he said, wrinkling his eyes after the first sip.

“ Go to the coffee stall. You’ll get beans there. Who can afford that expensive trash ? ” she replied.

Franz drank and reached for the newspaper.

“ I can’t abide that paper,” said Frau Kreusat angrily.

“ Why ? ”

“ There’s nothing but rubbish in it, and it’s turning your head.”

“ I must have a paper.”

“ Then take another. I can’t stand that one.”

Franz was indignant. “ The paper will go on coming ; no capitalist rag is coming in here.”

“ I don’t want you sticking your nose in what doesn’t concern you.”

Then began a sharp verbal skirmish. It was not the first time that Frau Kreusat had abused the paper. Up to now Franz had always carried it through and she had given in, but to-day she was roused and would not yield till he got very excited and stood up, saying, "I'll take the paper which suits me, and not what pleases you."

Frau Kreusat dropped her work and gazed at him in terror. Franz saw that he had frightened her and was sorry. "You've always something to nag about," he said.

"Go on, now. When I think of last year! Folks seem to have gone mad."

That was it. She had seen by chance, during the entry of the Reichswehr (militia) in February of the year before, a hand grenade thrown into a crowd of people. The brains of those killed had bespattered the iron fence. She had not forgotten it. Since then she had always been anxious about him, for he took part in all the demonstrations. The newspaper had to bear the blame because it summoned him to the meetings.

"Let him alone." Martin Kreusat stood up and brought his tall, thin form to the table. "You fuss over him as if you had just weaned him. The boy is five and twenty. Ought he to make himself a laughing stock among his fellows? Tie him tight to your apron strings, you foolish woman, you!"

"Last year Karl Kreschinski was struck dead," she defended herself. "There was no need for that. Karl was a young man and could have been alive now, but he was like our boy, wouldn't listen to what anyone told him and had to poke his nose in everywhere."

Franz stood up and put on an overcoat over his jacket. It was a much-mended grey military overcoat which he had brought with him from the front.

"Where are you going now?" asked Frau Kreusat, interrupting her explanation.

"To Theresa. She is at home to-day," replied Franz and tilted his cap on his shock of hair.

"Ah, so that's it."

In that "ah" was every possible shade of meaning, anxiety, jealousy and satisfaction. "Well, don't stay out too long."

Franz hardly knew whether to laugh or get angry. "What will you do when I get married?"

"The best thing you can do is to marry her," Martin muttered.

"You idiot!"

Now she herself laughed. She wiped her eye with the corner of her apron in the old way.

"You know, mother, a man has to be awfully patient with you?"

"Go on, get out, you fool. Remember me to Theresa and tell her not to keep you too long."

Martin spat noisily into the coalbox.

"Sleep well," cried Franz from the door, "I may be late."

"I will heat you a warm brick for your bed," said Frau Kreusat to Martin.

"I'd rather have my pipe."

Martin followed with his gaze a cockroach which was crawling up the opposite wall. Others followed it. They crawled out of the corner by the stove where it was getting too hot for them.

"The brutes are too comfortable with us. They are increasing by hundreds and will eat us up one day."

Frau Kreusat took up a leathern slipper and squashed them one after another. Then she took a pot of hot water and poured it on the wooden rafters and holes in the wall.

"I wonder if it's like this in the inspector's house? What would he say to that?" Martin laughed. "What do you think, old lady, he'd say to a hunt like this, the fat swine? Perhaps then he'd stop trying to cheat the men at every turn. Beetles in the living room, in the food, everywhere. How would he like that? He rides about in a car so that he can get quickly from one pit to another. Then he stands

at the shaft in the early morning and hurries them into the cage or writes down the names in the fine book, the greedy guts ! ”

Frau Kreusat had cleared away and tidied up.

“ Now off you go,” said she as she wrapped some clothes round the bricks and packed them into the bed. Martin disappeared into his room like a great, tottering shadow. He went to bed with the birds.

CHAPTER II

AS soon as Franz Kreusat got outside the tenement the March wind seized hold of him, entangling him in his coat and then dragging it away from him.

Before some workmen's dwellings in the Wilhelmstrasse he stopped and knocked at a door on the ground floor. Inside he heard old Trauten's quarrelsome voice.

"Come in!" said Theresa and threw open the door.
"Here you are at last."

"As you see," replied Franz, and got out of his coat which was dripping with water. "Foul weather! No night for a dog to be out in."

On the newly-upholstered sofa Trauten was sitting, turning over the pages of a book. He must have been about fifty and had bluish scars, the trade marks of a miner, on his face, which none the less looked fresh and healthy. He was a Social Democrat and took care that everyone knew it.

"Evening, Jacob."

"Evening."

"Sit down." Theresa pushed a chair over to Franz and sat down herself on the corner of the sofa.

"Have you seen the paper yet?" asked Trauten as he put a pinch of brown snuff first in one nostril and then in the other.

"I've only glanced through it. The old lady made a show about it as usual."

"She is quite right. Look at the stuff that's in it again!" Trauten pushed the *Ruhr Echo* towards him, "proper mares' nests!"

Franz took the paper and glanced through it.

Trauten got angry. "The Government must bear the responsibility for it again! An open invitation to get rid of it! And that's what they call Labour politics! Want to introduce Moscow conditions into Germany! Nothing that the Government does is right. What's the truth of the affair in your opinion?"

Franz recalled a talk he had had with his mate, Fritz Raup, who, some weeks before, had brought him into the Independent Socialist Party. He was for the overthrow of the Government and the setting up of the dictatorship of the workers. What Fritz Raup said was right in any case.

"The Government is not one which holds out any hopes for us workers, Fritz Raup said," answered Franz. "A Government which seeks its support from the machine guns of the anti-working class militia must go."

Trauten shouted. "Pooh, no one would expect anything else from the blockhead Raup! If the Government resigned what would you do then?"

"We'd take over."

"Pooh, you, perhaps, or Fritz Raup! Who'll take it over? Do you want to take over a mess-up? The cart is deep enough in the mire already."

Franz felt it his duty to defend the opinions of his friend Raup. "Who drove the cart into the ditch?"

"Who?" panted Trauten; he searched for an adequate answer.

His embarrassment gave Franz fresh courage. "Yes, who else than this very Government? What sort of trash have they hanging on to them? Will a crowd of ex-officers, who dragged us into the trenches for the Hohenzollerns, and a handful of profiteers, defend the republic? And it calls itself a Labour Government!"

Theresa became indignant. "Stop that jabbering now!" she exclaimed.

"What has the Government got to do?" roared Trauten. "Do you think that a former monarchist officer can never become a good republican?"

Franz Kreusat laughed shortly. "They proved that last year. Hand grenades thrown among the crowds, that is their idea of republicanism!"

Theresa yawned with boredom. She supported her father, who had become scarlet in the face and was waving his arms. "You swear by everything that fellow Raup says. He has taught you your lesson well."

"Don't think that I'm stupider than I am," replied Franz. "You listen to what the miners have to say!"

"Because they are being driven crazy every day," shrieked Trauten. "Who wouldn't go mad with the newspaper setting them on?"

"What is the Government to do? It has demanded socialization of industry. It has introduced the six-hour shift . . ."

"And in the meanwhile we work seven hours still and twice a week an extra half-hour as well!"

"You turn everything upside down with your nonsense." Trauten got up and went into the next room in a fury, shutting the door after him with a bang.

"Now he's backing out of it," laughed Franz.

"It's the wiser man gives in," said Theresa in defence of her angry father.

"But not by slamming doors so that the whitewash falls off the walls."

Both were silent. Franz reached for the paper over the contents of which old Trauten had got so excited.

"Leave it alone. Don't read it now." Theresa snatched the paper from him.

"The atmosphere is thick," said Franz. "Your father can't endure it. There's an awful stink up in Berlin."

She made a gesture of annoyance. "I wish you'd mind your own business."

An atmosphere of mutual irritation persisted. One remark followed another till Franz got up and reached for his cloak. "I'd better go."

"Go to Raup. You can never jaw long enough with him."

"Fritz Raup understands things. He takes a question by its horns."

He threw his woollen scarf round him and took up his cap. Theresa jumped up from the corner of the sofa with a start and snatched off his cap. "Where are you going? Stay here!" she said.

He stood undecided in the middle of the kitchen. She wiped her eyes a little and observed him between lowered lashes. Her face was not unbeautiful. It was healthy and fresh and framed by unruly wisps of black hair. Theresa swayed from her hips and played with the cap.

"Off you go!" she teased him.

"Give me my cap then."

"What do I look like in it?" She laughed and tilted the cap on her head.

"I wish I were a boy!" she said as she peered complacently at herself in the mirror on the wall.

"Look! You must wear your cap like this. It looks more dashing." She wheeled right-about and peered at him provocatively. "Brr, man," she stuck out her tongue at him laughingly, "you stand there like a sheep. And you're supposed to be engaged to me! You're just like a stone image!"

She dragged him by force to the chair. "Take off your things. Give me that coat here. You're half asleep."

He made no attempt to defend himself. She made a face at him. "You are a silly fellow, like a block of wood, and clumsy. You call yourself a man!" He tried to interrupt her.

"Be quiet." She held his mouth closed. "No more chat!"

Theresa was transformed, as it were. "Franz, you silly fellow. I come back once a month and then you act as if I were a wisp of straw to which there is no need to pay any attention."

"Don't talk like that!"

"It is so, Franz, and it's because of this Raup."

"Raup is my friend and comrade."

"Again! I won't hear any more about him. Listen to that dog out there."

In a neighbouring yard a dog felt the cold and howled in heartrending lamentation.

"When an animal howls like that someone is going to die," chattered Theresa.

"At any rate that cur will die if he is kept on a chain day and night and is given nothing to eat."

They both laughed.

CHAPTER III

THE shaft bottom re-echoed with the noise of the colliers streaming back from the workings.

The last coal wagons were rebounding on to the cages, which creaked and see-sawed under their heavy burdens. Locomotives shrieked and went off trailing a long line of empty wagons behind them. There were shrieks, signals and the crash of iron pit railings. The suspension ropes clashed against the timber of the pit and spurted stinking mud into the shaft bottom; lumps of coal rattled down the shaft. The banksmen endeavoured to finish off. Again and again half a dozen grimy fists packed the wagon full, shoved as soon as the cage came up with the empty wagons from below, and stopped, pushed forward with a mighty jolt and bounced the empty ones out of the cage and the full ones on to it. The miners shouted, cursed, yelled abuse and cleverly got out of the way of the roaring coal trains.

"Finished!" The banksmen pushed the last empties from the cage and closed the safety doors.

"Cram yourself!" yelled a young miner after a man who had just come up and was pushing his way through the crowd. "Cram yourself, cram yourself!" roared a whole crowd. "Blasted coal-eater, he can't cram his guts full enough!" There was laughter.

"Peter, you're losing your backside through your pants. How many double chins have you got now?"

The man whom they were teasing ducked and vanished, muttering, into the crowd.

"Our Johnny had a tough hide, our Johnny had a tough hide!

Kick him on the backside!" sang a chorus after an engine driver.

Shrieks of laughter followed him. There were quarrelling groups who had drawn too little and had not packed the gob tight enough with rubbish. "Why has so little been got out?" "That'll bait Wilson's trap!" called a humorist. Laughter followed this. "Five wagons per man or blood on the prop!" "In conveyor No. 6 someone has got a knock on the back again!" "The place for accidents!" "In my place you'd be a Catholic!"

Beside a full coal wagon squatted two men. They were talking and arguing. One was Fritz Raup, a hewer, in the thirties, of medium height and powerfully built. Squatting beside him with his knees drawn up to his chin was Jupp Zermack, a tall, broad-shouldered East Prussian. His strong yellow teeth gleamed in his grimy face. An inquisitive group surrounded them. Franz Kreusat also joined the crowd. As usual, the events of the day were the subject of the discussion. One of those standing by objected.

"You see things too black, Jupp. Socialization . . ."

"Goes on apace," another broke in.

"It is useless." The Majority Socialist drew back muttering. The miners laughed. "Nah, shut your mouth, August."

"The bacon is rancid, August. You can only cheat the miners once. Socialization goes on; thank your comrades for that. That is why the workers get the blue beans (bullets) if they do not agree to it."

"Like in February, 1929."

"These 'national' comrades, who are only out for cushy jobs, ought to be sent down the pit with us."

"To tilt coal—and we'd make them eat the dirty grub we get."

Miners were flocking round a placard. Raup and Zermack also sprang up from the truck and pushed their way there. Some of the miners of the midday shift had arrived and were spreading the news.

"The Government is overthrown," Zermack heard.

"Fritz, did you hear that?" They elbowed their way towards the men of the midday shift.

"Is it true?"

"The Government had to fly," a hewer informed them. "The Reichswehr has taken possession of Berlin and declared for Kapp and Lüttwitz."

"Up there there's a poster calling for law and order. A call for a rising is punishable by death."

"Don't be afraid," Jupp answered. "They are playing us a dirty trick. The midday shift must not produce a pound of coal. All must come out at once."

One cage after another whirred up noisily into the daylight.

"Pass it along that no one remains underground," ordered Zermack. "We must have a meeting of all workers of the pit at once."

He climbed into the cage and rode upon it. There was a dispute in progress at the pithead. A mine inspector was trying to drive the hesitating miners down with threats. "Carry on. What does it matter to you what has happened in Berlin? Transport and coal are still needed."

"Not a shovelful more," said Jupp as he pushed the inspector aside with a powerful shove. "Of course it matters to us what is going on in Berlin."

"You are rendering yourself liable to punishment," threatened the official. "Anyone inciting to revolt . . ."

"Yes, I know," said Jupp quietly. "He'll be shot." He stood beside the poster and let the pit inspector curse.

"No one is going in, comrades," he said to those surrounding him. "You can't shoot as easy as all that. All away to the pit baths now!"

"I will report you," roared the inspector, and swelled with fury. "You shall not be allowed to interfere with production."

"Give it him, Zermack." "Give him one on the snout," called another miner; "the monkey is throwing his weight about."

"Do what you like!" yelled the official, but he prudently withdrew from the vicinity of the infuriated crowd. "I will soon find you a place where this sort of intimidation will be stopped."

"The swine is threatening us." "Pack him in the cage!" "Let him go down and get his own coal!" The miners pressed forward in a threatening mass, and their looks boded no good. "Come on now, down into the pit with you!"

The inspector went chalky white. He made a bound up the iron steps and ran away as hard as he could. Like a black stream the miners poured after him. The staircase echoed under the thundering tread of numberless heavy wooden shoes and nail-studded mining boots. It poured into the steamy, dust-filled wash-houses, where a multitude of thin chains, on which hung bundles of ragged clothes, filled the air with a concert of ear-splitting shrieks as they were hauled up and down. Side by side stood hewers, butties and hauliers, washed and unwashed, naked and half dressed, and talked, yelling to each other. They were waiting for the works committee, but it remained away.

"Listen, all of you." Jupp Zermack sprang upon a bench and made a rudder-like movement with his strong bare arms. He had thrown off his jacket. A strong smell of sweat met him. They all struggled to get near the place where Zermack was making signs that he was about to speak.

"Order now!" "Hold your noise!" "Zermack wants to say something!" "Order!"

The noise died down. Expectantly, packed close together, they looked up at him. Zermack waited till there was complete silence.

"Comrades . . ."

Even the chains had stopped creaking. Nothing was to be heard save the dull thud of the engine.

"Comrades . . ." Zermack's left arm pointed to the door, where a large bill was hanging. "Miners, why is that

dirty piece of paper still hanging there? You've every one of you read it and know what is on it. The Ebert Government let hand grenades be thrown at us last year in the name of law and order. The Kapp and Lüttwitz Government is going to preserve law and order like its predecessors. We don't want Law and Order which hides behind bayonets and machine guns. We've had enough of this kind of thing. They'll be driving us into the pits next with guns and rifle butts! Let our answer to the swine be: 'Not one blow from a pick, not one shovelful of coal from the pit till the administration has gone to hell!'

"Hear, hear!" "Hurrah!"

There was a roar of applause and cries of "Down with swindlers!" "Away with the bloody swine!"

Hundreds of men pushed their way to the door where the yellow poster was hanging, crying, "Tear it down!"

Hands seized the poster and tore it down. Feet trampled and trod on the remains of it as they lay on the stone floor. Meanwhile another speaker had climbed on to one of the benches. He was from the Works Council. He had an anxious expression and waved his hands excitedly. His mouth could be seen opening and shutting, but every word was lost in the tempest of excitement which had seized the assembled crowd.

"Order!" "Order now!" "Peter has something to say!" "Shut your mug, damn you!" "Order, o—order!" The buzzing, yelling mob surged again like a mighty flood towards the middle of the wash-house. "Order, the Works Council member wishes to speak!"

"Peter has got his instructions from the management!" called out a hewer. Laughter was heard through the hum of the crowd here and there for a moment. The member of the Works Council raised his arms as if taking an oath and said something. Raup and Zermack, and Franz Kreusat with them, also tried to get nearer the speaker.

"Nothing yet known . . . the trade unions . . . there-

fore wait until . . ." Only words torn from their context reached them.

"He's using soft soap again," said Zermack angrily. "What does he want?" His strong bass voice rang out above the din. "Push the jabberer down!"

He climbed on another bench. "Comrades, we will take the vote." He waved his enormous hands in the hot air, thick with steam and smoke.

"All come this way!" "It's Jupp!" A wall of men squeezed their way around him.

"Comrades, we will put it to the vote. Will all those in favour of strike action raise their hands?"

The member of the Works Council turned as red as a lobster. He pranced about on the bench. "Wait, comrades, just wait now!"

"Those in favour of strike action raise their hands!"

Zermack yelled this loud enough for all to hear. A forest of hands were raised. Only a few hesitated timidly and cast furtive glances at the Works Council representative, who had jumped down from the bench and was snorting with rage.

"It is much too early, men! Have some sense!"

"Shut your mouth, man. Go to the bosses and let those swine pay you for your villainy!" shouted an old hewer scornfully to the Works Council member. The man, who had never been popular, swore and left Zermack to carry on.

"Shall we let the boiler fires out?" asked a stoker who had come into the wash-house half naked, coal-black and covered with sweat.

"Yes, all of them!" cried Zermack.

"The engineer has threatened to split on us," the stoker called back to him.

"Chuck him out of the boiler-house and rake out the furnaces!"

The crowd thronged round the stoker and pressed him closely with cries of "Get a move on!" "Put out the fires or we'll do it for you!"

“ To the boiler-house ! ” shouted a young hewer.

“ Come on ! ”

“ Extinguish the coke oven too ! ”

“ Forward, boys ; come on all of you ! ” And the noisy stream of humanity flowed towards the door.

Like a battering ram the head of the crowd squeezed through the unlit corridor past the tool-shed, through the second door into the open air. Opposite, in the manager’s office, white, worried faces—those of the works manager and some officials—were pressed against the window-panes.

“ What are we waiting for ? ” called one of the miners. “ We’re going to bring out the boiler-house men. Are you afraid ? ”

There was a movement among the mass of workers.

“ On to the boiler-house ! ”

“ Put out the fires ! ”

The faces in the manager’s office became distorted with fear and disappeared. The stream of workers swelled larger and larger, surged backwards and forwards, swinging this way and that. A section separated from the main stream and dashed towards the boiler-house. Another squeezed its way towards the engine-room. “ Not a wheel shall turn ! ”

In the centre of the stream stood Jupp. He champed his strong jaws and laughed excitedly. “ On, boys, we’re here now ! ”

“ Strike ! ”

CHAPTER IV

TWO days had passed since the fall of the Government.

Not a wheel turned in the pits. On the afternoon of the first day Franz, Raup and the other miners had called out the employees of the Zollverein Collery from the mine. Not a single chimney was smoking. The iron gates of the coalyard and retail shops were closed. The usual dull throbbing of the machines and the thud of the steam hammer in the Krupp Works were silenced. The goods stations were choked with hundreds of trucks of steel, coal and coke waiting for export. All the workers were on strike ; the men upon whom the Government which had been driven out of office had now called for help.

Franz ran across Raup in the street. "Franz, at three o'clock you must lead the workers to Gerlingsplatz," called Raup hastily as he hurried past. "I can't do it myself, Franz. I have to attend the meeting of the Party Committee."

Franz swallowed his dinner as fast as he could. "Now, take your time, you'll choke yourself," grumbled his mother. "The way you're going on you'll come to the same end as Karl Krestchinski ! God help me when I think of it !"

Franz was accustomed to his mother's lamentations. "We're on strike, and a hundred thousand miners and other workers too. Just look at the city, how it's swarming with men ! To-day we're marching to Gerlingsplatz. They're coming from all the workshops." Franz seized his cap from the hook on the wall, tilted it on his head, put on his overcoat and rushed to the door.

"Take care of yourself, boy," she called after him.

"I'll be sure to do that. So long!" he cried and ran down the stairs two steps at a time.

Frau Naumann was standing on the first floor.

"Where are you off to?" she asked.

"We're marching on Essen. Send your husband with us."

"He's still asleep."

"Rout him out of the blankets."

Down below on the street Franz met other miners who were also hurrying to the place of assembly. They came out of every house, met one another, asking questions and arguing. On the square hundreds who had managed to force their way through were already gathered. There was a buzzing and humming like the sound of an enormous swarm of bees. In the middle of the square a red flag had been unfurled. A gust of wind caught hold of it and it swelled and fluttered in the breeze, red as blood.

Zermack's bass voice rang out from the midst, "Get ready. Into the ranks!"

The miners, who had been joined by some of the iron workers from Nölle's Steelworks, formed themselves slowly and with difficulty into a long column lining the square. Jupp Zermack climbed on a wall and looked round for Franz Kreusat.

"Franz, Franz Kreusat!" he called, signalling with his arm to Franz, who was in the ranks with the miners, to come to him.

"Franz, will you bring them to Gerlingsplatz? I'm off to fetch the Zollverein men who are assembling at the junction."

Franz was scarlet with excitement. "Comrades, we are marching to Gerlingsplatz. Attention! Keep in step! Forward march!" The column got slowly under way. In front of it the red flag flew higher and swelled in the breeze.

"Sing, let's sing!"

The head of the procession emerged on to the main street.

Someone began the "International," "Arise, ye starvelings from your slumbers!"

At the windows of the houses fronting the street appeared the frightened faces of their bourgeois owners. Blinds rattled down.

"They are getting windy!" The miners looked up triumphantly. They joked and laughed. "They're frightened out of their lives." As they passed the colliery tenements they sang: "Peoples, hear the watchword."

Faces of women and children, careworn and joyful, looked out. "Take care you don't get hurt," they called to the men.

"We'll eat 'em alive," the marchers in front called up to them. Here and there appeared a shamefaced man who had been left behind. "Fall into the ranks!" they called.

"Here they are!" shouted Frau Naumann to Frau Kreusat, who was sweeping the stairs, "and that daredevil Franz at the head of them!"

Frau Kreusat sighed and stumbled up the stairs. Martin was standing at the window looking down on the passing procession, a feverish flush on his cheeks.

"Franz is marching in front with the banner," he said in a hoarse voice. "The stupid boy," she muttered, pushing Martin on one side. She hung far out of the window to catch a glimpse of the head of the procession, where her Franz was marching. He waved his hand to her.

The head of the procession curved round the corner of the street. "My boy, foolish lad!" sighed Frau Kreusat and shut the window. Martin muttered something, stepped slowly back into the kitchen and took his usual place beside the stove.

"Did you see them?" The heavy face of Frau Naumann appeared at the door. "If things come to a head there'll be a dust-up. They've trampled on us a bit too long."

"Live and let live! I haven't heard of anyone starving yet," said Frau Kreusat sulkily.

"You've only one mouth to feed. I have a houseful of

kids. The old man lands me with another every year. I'm no better than a rabbit. Nothing to do but suckle kids and see about grub."

She went angrily away. " You damned fool, you won't get anything by bowing and scraping. No ! they'll only trample you deeper in the mud ! "

Her youngest child wailed below.

" Now then, you little devil !" she scolded.

CHAPTER V

GERLINGSPLATZ was black with people. Countless red flags and posters with white and coloured inscriptions fluttered over the heads of the multitude. From the surrounding houses men were making speeches.

"We are determined . . ." "General strike . . ." "All power to the workers . . ." "Socialism . . ." "To defend by all means in our power . . ." "The dictatorship of the proletariat . . ."

On all sides there was a buzz of activity. There were speakers from the Social Democrats, the Independent Socialists and the Spartacus League. Just as they were entering Gerlingsplatz Franz Kreusat had a surprise. Swagging and full of assurance in the middle of the Sölling strasse stood Jacob Trauten.

"Stoppenberg contingent this way!"

He looked angrily around him and attached himself to Franz Kreusat. "This is a nice business, eh? I tell you, without the trade unions you can do nothing, absolutely nothing, Franz! If the Government had not called for a general strike the pits would still be working."

The miners who recognized him were facetious.

"What sort of an instrument are you playing now, Jacob?"

"We'll turn in over there where our man is speaking," he replied and stretched his short, thick arm in that direction.

"Leave us alone, Jacob. We'd rather hear the others."

"We ought all to pull together to-day," said Trauten in an offended tone.

"Then don't stay with us any longer, old man."

"Idiot!" Trauten was furious.

The procession followed Franz Kreusat, greatly to Trauten's annoyance, to the spot where a clear, vigorous voice rang out from a lorry. Small but powerfully built, his head uncovered, his whole body in lively movement, a Spartacus speaker was addressing the masses of workers around him.

"They have betrayed us times enough. Think of the murders of workers in Berlin, Munich, everywhere. They have rewarded you with machine-gun shots for your trust in them! To your demand for the introduction of the six-hour shift they have replied with hand grenades. There is not one atom of difference between the Ebert and Noske régime and the present Kapp and Lüttwitz Government. Only when you, the proletariat, take the power into your own hands can and will the safety of Socialism be assured."

In the roars of applause and tumult which followed the words of the other speakers were drowned. The crowd strove to get nearer the young speaker and gave their attention to him alone. "Who really believes that the capitalist forces will let themselves be frightened off by a strike? We demand the immediate disarmament of the anti-working class Reichswehr and police, and the arming of the workers."

"Hear, hear!" "Arms!" Trauten shook his head. "Lord! how stupid! Why this fuss? We can of course do all we want through the general strike. The police are already bound by oath."

"Wasn't the Reichswehr?" a worker asked him.

"Here we have only to deal with the police and they are on our side," Trauten replied in self-defence.

A cordon of armed police was forming in the square.

"Look there!" the worker pointed to the police. "If they are with us why are they carrying arms?"

"They have got to keep order."

The worker turned towards Trauten. A small circle of curious listeners surrounded him.

" What do we want them to keep order for ? "

" That fat fellow's talking through his hat."

" You are neither hot nor cold."

" He's a split."

" Buzz off, old chap. Go over to the greencoats for shelter ! "

Trauten pushed his way out of the hostile circle. He searched for Franz and ran across Raup in the far corner of the square. Raup was also looking for Franz.

" Well, Jacob ? "

" Hotheads like that fellow over there ought not to be allowed to speak." Trauten pointed to the lorry on which the Spartacus man was still speaking.

" Why ? "

" He is demanding the arming of the workers ! Did you ever hear such rot ? What do we have a general strike for ? "

" A general strike is not enough. The police are still wavering."

" Nonsense. They are supporting our Government."

Raup had come from the Party Committee. There he had learnt that the police officers had come to an understanding with the Kapp and Lüttwitz Government. There were serious collisions to be feared.

" The greencoats are not well disposed towards us. You will have an unpleasant surprise," said Raup.

Trauten defended himself obstinately against this suspicion. From his point of view the police were bound by oath to defend the constitution and he would not be dissuaded.

The orators had stopped speaking. The demonstrators who had disbanded formed themselves up again. The procession was so long that the whole of it could not be seen at once. The greencoats had suddenly disappeared without leaving a trace. Raup, who had found Franz with the Stoppenberg contingent, beckoned to a man who was standing in the square scanning the procession as it moved off.

"Hallo, Will ! Here, Mahler, this way."

The man he called turned round and saw Raup beckoning to him. He came nearer. He was a man of medium build with strongly-developed shoulders. His rather pale face was round and adorned with a short moustache. He was the district representative of the local group of Independent Socialists.

He made a wry face. "What are you doing ? You've done everything off your own bat without telling me !"

"We couldn't wait till you came. You may thank your stars that we were ready without you."

Mahler knew that Jupp Zermack was behind the whole business. "Jupp must let himself be guided a bit by the local," he said.

Raup got angry. "What have you against him ? He is doing perfectly right. Where were you on the first day when the pit meeting wanted you ?"

"Don't ask silly questions." Mahler got surly. He had not been able to make up his mind to speak at the pit meeting. The Council had been cunning.

Franz Kreusat could not endure this surly individual. He felt it his duty to protect Jupp Zermack. "Jupp has been busy on this job from the very beginning."

Mahler looked at him contemptuously. "And you too ?" he asked.

Franz felt his face become as red as fire. He turned away in disgust. Neither did the arrogant manner of the district representative please Raup.

"You seem to have had a drop too much," he said sharply and took no further notice of him.

The procession of demonstrators moved forward jerkily. The marshals waved their arms and shouted. The sun was hidden by grey clouds. With it vanished also what little warmth there was in the air and those standing still began to get very cold.

"Get on ! Damn you."

"They seem to be blocked somewhere in front."

"Perhaps the greencoats have separated them."

They went forward slowly and jerkily. A couple of steps, a halt, another couple of steps, then a halt again. By now the head of the procession was already in the neighbourhood of the Central Railway Station. Behind, the workers of the Friedrich-Ernestine Colliery contingents reached back as far as the Sölling strasse. Thousands were still standing in the square, which seemed to have become no emptier.

"You'd think that with all these people we could stick the whole of the police and their hangers-on in our pockets," said Fritz Raup to the astonished Franz.

He nodded. He read the inscriptions on the banners of those contingents which were passing them. These were from the Graf Beust and Matthias Stinnes and half a dozen collieries from Old Essen, the Königin Elisabeth and Hubert pits, from the Joachim Mine, from Kray, Steele and Karnap, and the workers from the Helene Amalie, Wolfsbank, Karolus Magnus, Bonafazius and Dahlbusch collieries. There were smelters, welders, boiler-makers and riveters, railway shopmen from Krupp's, workers from numberless industrial undertakings, great and small, railwaymen and tramway employees. There were contingents of women with brave faces, and red kerchiefs on their heads, carrying banners they had improvised on the march.

It was as if a mighty hurricane had uprooted them, hurled them up from the walls of their factories and the depths of the earth and spewed them forth on to the streets. So there they were standing and marking time impatiently on the cobbled streets. Then on they marched with roars of cheering, singing revolutionary songs.

By this time they were marching without halts, moving briskly along. Through the Cattlemarket they went, into the Kettwiger Strasse, to the Central Railway Station, past the Huyssenallee up as far as the Klarastrasse, down the Zweigerstrasse to the police headquarters, through

the district where the more wealthy citizens lived, who looked down with pale faces on the demonstration from the windows of their villas.

At the windows of the police headquarters, which were barred by a cordon of greencoats fully armed, uniformed men could be seen. High up on the roof, on the towers of the County Court Buildings, machine guns had been installed, with their crews behind them ready to fire.

"Do you see? There they are!" "Hope they don't shoot yet!"

They regarded the police cordon and the windows with eyes full of hatred. Fists were raised threateningly. Loud voices exclaimed, "What are you gaping at?" "What do you want?" "Why the guns?"

One cry was heard above all others: "To the devil with you! We don't want you. If you are on our side, why have you got your helmets on?"

The faces under the steel helmets turned pale. They were strange, stupid-looking faces, well-fed too; fresh from their country air, they were those of peasant youths.

Behind were their officers, lieutenants with duelling scars, slender of hip, with Brownings in their hands. "Those are the goods!" called out a worker.

"Discipline, comrades! Keep quiet! Keep order, comrades!" This was the parting advice of the speakers on Gerlingsplatz. Only the Spartacus man had said, "Without arms in our hands are we nothing in spite of our hundreds of thousands? As yet they do not shoot, but how long will this last? . . ."

A shot rang out in front of them. It was followed by another. The marchers recoiled on the top of one another. They cursed. "What is happening, damn it?" There was a rattle of machine-gun fire in front.

"Back!"

Then there was a squeezing and pushing. Women

shrieked. "The greencoats are shooting! They are shooting at us!"

Shot followed shot. The stream of humanity broke and flowed into the neighbouring streets with the police cordon in pursuit.

CHAPTER VI

THE next day Franz was looking for Fritz Raup, with whom he had an appointment in Cattlemarket Square. He had already been in the Maschinenstrasse at the Party Committee meeting. The Party Secretary had telephoned to the police headquarters and demanded to know why the police had fired. He had lodged a protest about it.

He had received a sneering reply : " We are neutral. We only intervene in emergencies to preserve law and order."

By the afternoon an edict was out forbidding demonstrations. Raudinger, the secretary, lost his head. The others also had no idea what to do. Meanwhile the news came from Wetter that the Lichtschlag Corps had been disarmed.

" Aren't you going to do anything ? " asked Fritz Raup indignantly. " To-morrow they'll drive us back to work at the point of the bayonet."

" It's not so bad as that yet. Wait a bit," said Raudinger.

Raup was still furiously angry when he met Franz in Cattlemarket Square.

" The Kapp Government seems to have resigned," Franz called out to him.

" What does it matter to us ? "

" Well, the old one is back again."

" We're fighting for neither one nor the other. Damn both of them ; whichever is in the worker starves ! "

Franz saw that something had riled his friend. " What is the matter with you ? " he asked.

" If we find ourselves in the soup we've only those defeatists in the Maschinenstrasse to thank for it. They

are clinging like cripples to those in the Grabenstrasse. Keep off the subject of arms or they'll all have fits ! ”

Franz had to laugh heartily. His laughter infected Raup, angry though he was.

“ Pah, it's sickening ! They are always talking about the dictatorship of the proletariat, yet they shudder at the thought of demanding arms.”

Cattlemarket Square and the street corners nearby were thronged with men. “ The damned swine have barricaded the Town Hall. There are machine guns everywhere,” was the talk on all sides.

They squeezed their way through the crowd, and were trying to get into Cattlemarket Street when they noticed a terrific commotion there. Men were cursing and falling back. Women were shrieking and running down the side-streets and into doorways, terrified by crashing detonations.

Neither had grasped what was happening before the gun-barrels of the greencoats were glittering right on them.

“ Off the streets ! ” yelled the police, and struck at the fugitives.

Raup hesitated and wanted to protest, but received a sharp blow on the shoulder. He fell to his knees. When he got up he got a second blow on the head. Stars danced before the eyes of the half-stunned man. Franz, who had parried the blows of one of the greencoats, picked his fallen friend up in his arms and slipped with him into a doorway while the greencoats were pursuing the last of the fugitives. This doorway was already packed tight with a mass of frightened humanity.

“ Can't we go further in, into the yard or the house ? ” moaned a woman as she wiped with her handkerchief the blood from her lip, which had been cut open.

“ The brutes have gone mad ! I wanted to go to the station, and was going straight along, without a thought of harm, when a fellow stepped up and landed me a blow in the face. He hit me in the mouth, the beast. My teeth are loose.”

She spat out some blood and began to cry.

"Why are they always provoking them like that?" said a well-dressed man reproachfully. He looked like a better-paid civil servant.

"Why do they get in people's way with their machine guns? Why is that?" said an excited miner with a blue scar over his eye, angrily. The civil servant was silent.

"They have gone for us, anyhow; they are like devils let loose," said a second worker. "When I tried to protect myself from the gun-barrel of one, another kicked me on the shin."

Fritz Raup regained consciousness and felt his head. A big bump was rising on his forehead; blood came off on his hand when he felt it, and his left shoulder seemed to have received a knock. Franz helped him to his feet.

"What has happened? How did I get this?"

"How indeed? Damned if I know! You ran forward, I ran after you. Then you stopped one. I thought they had killed you. You went down like an empty sack."

Raup clenched his teeth. His shoulder hurt him. "That's your neutrality!" He laughed bitterly.

"They have thrown hand grenades," a man told them. "One of them exploded just behind me. Look here!" He pointed to his torn cloak.

"How did it begin?" asked a woman, anxiously clasping her crying child to her.

"It started with a shot." One of them, who had seen the affair, volunteered this information. "One of the greencoats let his gun bark in Church Street. When the shot rang out the others fired too."

"The whole business is only a frame-up of theirs," said a miner, with a hostile glance at the well-dressed man, who cleared his throat. "They were only waiting for an excuse like this to give it us in the neck."

"You shouldn't talk like that, my man," the other reproached him. "Who wanted it? The police had their

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"You shouldn't talk like that, my man," the other reproached him. "Who wanted it? The police had their

instructions to preserve order. You'd be surprised what a riot there would have been if they had done nothing."

"What if there was?" the miner interrupted him.
"If we want order we can keep it ourselves."

The other laughed derisively.

"Oh, you can sneer!" The miner was getting vicious.
"You don't seem to have felt the pinch. You ought to go down a mine for a bit and slide along on your knees and belly hewing coal."

"Or make him dig twenty-five trucks of it, then he wouldn't talk so much." Another miner carried on the tale.

"He ought to go to Krupp's and scratch for ten hours a day in the furnaces till his skin cracks, then he'd talk differently."

The respectable individual held his tongue. He thought it wiser. The crowd was getting very excited. Suddenly they heard a sharp word of command given. The door swung back with a jerk. The women screamed with fright and clung together. "Jesus and Mary defend us!"

At the door greencoats were standing. They had their guns trained on the dimly-lighted passage.

"Out of there now!"

No one wanted to be the first to go out. Only the well-dressed gentleman stepped forward, saying, "I went in there by mistake, officers."

The nearest greencoat made a gesture, and he passed by the policemen with a polite little smile on his lips.

"Come on, get out of that!" yelled a policeman to the others.

"Come on!" whispered Raup to Franz. They stepped forward from the huddled group of people and came to the door. The eyes of the greencoats followed them suspiciously. "What's the matter with you?" one asked, pointing to Raup's bleeding forehead.

"A swipe from one of your lot," answered Raup, and there was an undercurrent of scorn in his reply.

"Then you should have kept out of the way," shouted

one of the greencoats to him. "Get out of it now!" Franz got a kick, and Raup was impelled after him by a vicious push. He stood stock still with rage. "Bloody swine!" he muttered.

Franz dragged him away. They heard shrieks from the doorway. They looked round and saw people being thrown out one after another. The woman with the injured mouth became hysterical.

"Hold your noise, you bitch! Why didn't you stay at home?" yelled a greencoat to her. He seemed to be in charge of the detachment. Two other women brought out the hysterical one and dragged her, screaming, to the other side of the street.

"Clear the streets!"

A cordon of men in uniform was behind them. The police struck at the indignant throngs who had gathered together at the street corners with the butts of their rifles. Simultaneously shots rang out in other parts of the city. There processions had formed and advanced against the obstructing police cordons. They were attacked with guns and hand grenades.

"This can't go on," cried a worker from Krupp's, covered with blood, who had been struck down. He was dragging his right leg after him. "The brutes kicked me when I was down. My wife was by me with her mouth full of blood. I wanted to support her, but another pig kicked me in the knee-cap. We were knocked down on the pavement, and they shot into the middle of us as if we were wild beasts. This can't go on."

All around were faces chalky white; yells of anger rang out. "No, we can't get at them with bare fists!"

"Tear up the paving stones and make a barricade." "They'll smoke us out; guns are what we want." "Guns."

Everywhere men thronged together with the cry, "We need guns!"

"The workers have occupied Dortmund. They have

thrown out the Noskerites." This bit of news was like oil on the flames. Gloomy faces brightened.

"Where do they keep the rifles here?"

"The Reichswehr has taken them."

"And dangles them before our noses. No one takes them!"

"If only we could get hold of them!"

"Off we go! Who is coming?" A crowd set off menacingly. "Bring stones with you. If they shoot, let 'em have them."

The crowd advanced nearer the police cordon which was barring the way to Cattlemarket Street and the Horse-market. The police watched them attentively. Some of the greencoats became uneasy and got ready to fire.

"Don't run away even if they do shoot."

"As soon as we get near throw your stones at them and charge," called the workers to one another.

The crowd pressed together and pushed its way nearer. The greencoats also stepped forward. "Back! Clear the street!" they shouted.

Those in front of the crowd wavered. "Forward!" urged those behind.

"Clear the street!" An officer sprang behind the cordon and gave a curt command: "Fire!"

"Lie down!" yelled the workers. "Halt; don't run away, you cowards!"

"Fire!" A volley was fired in the air over the heads of the workers.

"Clear the street!"

"Throw your stones." A hail of stones rattled over. There was a second volley into the midst of the crowd of men, followed by screams and cries of "Back!"

The greencoats charged forward in close formation. Again there was a volley of stones. The shots rang out—ping! ping! ping! Men were left lying on the ground. Rifle butts crashed down on the others. Dragging one another back in disorderly retreat, they fled over Cattle-

market Square, into side-streets, into houses, the greencoats after them. Again the police fired and charged with the butts of their rifles.

Raup and Franz had gone with the crowd. Franz had picked up a heavy stone and flung it with all his strength at the officer, who had only escaped the missile by ducking nimbly. Raup was swearing because he could not throw a stone owing to the injury to his shoulder.

They now ran away as fast as they could. They reached the city gate to the right of the stinking, dusty Cattle-market, where the slope to Stoppenberg curved round like a snake. They were at Freistein.

Wounded men who had been brought along by their companions were hobbling by, or sitting on the steps of the houses with faces as pale as death.

"What are they doing?" bloodless lips and terror-stricken eyes were asking.

"It's guns we want. It's the same everywhere. We can only drive them out with guns."

"Guns!"

It got dark. The city was veiled by clouds. The green-coats had advanced their barriers to the city gates. In the streets appeared numerous squads of special constables who had been called out to assist the police.

"There they are, the bastards!"

Workers who came from the city, and durst only walk singly, spat in their direction. "Aren't you ashamed of yourselves? You fill your guts at the expense of the miners and then shoot them down when you're ordered!"

The special constables smiled in an embarrassed way. They were afraid although they were carrying guns. They were business men, civil servants, and in some cases even workers.

"Pah!"

"We are only doing our duty."

"Go and hang yourselves! Doing your duty to whom?"

"It's hot down there," said the few who had managed

to get through the barrier. "There is nothing but police rifles and machine guns in the city."

"By order of Ebert's Government. It's preserving law and order!"

"Like it did in February! Thanks to it, we threw down our picks and brought the pits and factories to a standstill!"

"The general strike will be called off."

"Not without our consent."

"Come on!" Raup took Kreusat by the arm and dragged him away from the listeners. They walked along side by side in silence. Indistinct before them loomed the Stoppenberg tenements and, in a circle round the district, the iron towers of the Friedrich-Ernestine and Zollverein collieries. There was no throbbing of machinery, no glow of the furnaces, such as they were accustomed to hear and see; they lay cold and still, even the cages were at rest. The general strike was in progress.

"To-morrow or the next day we shall crawl back there as before," said Raup, clenching his teeth. He stretched out his arm and pointed to the collieries.

"Who says so?" Franz's voice had changed. It had become harder than before.

CHAPTER VII

A MESSENGER had come. Mahler was to go to the city at once. "What's up now?" the district representative asked him, his face pale.

"I don't know anything for certain," replied the messenger. "The workers are rising everywhere. Only we in Essen are dozing. Hurry up!" And he was off again.

"God damn it!" Mahler rushed to find Zermack and tell him that he had been summoned to the city. "Call the comrades together and we'll meet at Schiemann's when I get back."

He started off on his journey.

"You needn't wait up. Go to bed and have a sleep," said Jupp Zermack to his wife, who was kneeling on the hearth splitting some firewood with a miner's axe.

"Go on now," said the plump little woman, and went on splitting the wood.

He stroked her tangled hair with his big hand. She looked up at him, laughed and said, "Now, now, you old bear, go on with you!"

Jupp Zermack went over to Kreusat's. He wanted Franz to help him call together the other comrades. He had no luck; Frau Kreusat was worried out of her mind because Franz had not come in.

"Where is Franz?" asked Zermack.

Frau Kreusat was economical and had not yet lit the lamp.

"What do you want with him now?" she asked sullenly.

"We are holding a meeting."

"Oh, those stupid meetings of yours!"

"We must hold one. We want him to help . . ."

"Can't you hold your meetings without him?" she grumbled, "before he comes to some harm. You'll be in the soup soon, and he with you. You're making my boy quite crazy."

"You're talking nonsense."

Zermack stuttered perplexedly. He was not used to arguing with women. The old woman had put him out of his reckoning. "Damned old wives' tales!" he muttered. "We're not going to eat him!"

"No, you're not!"

The oil lamp flamed up. Its dim yellow light shone full in Zermack's face. He blinked and shut his eyes for a second. She stepped nearer and looked him full in the face with hatred in her eyes. "No, the boy is not going out of my house again."

"Franz is no longer a child," he replied angrily.

"No, he's no longer a child, but so long as his mother lives he has got to obey her."

Jupp Zermack saw the futility of arguing with her. "You've a bee in your bonnet."

"I know very well what I've got," she called down the stairs after him. "He's not going to another meeting from my house to-day."

Jupp crossed over the railway bridge and went across the field to the Feldstrasse. An obtrusive smell of sewers came from the tiny patch of ploughed field which lay on each side of the narrow footpath. He hurried to get on with his job of assembling the comrades.

Isolated shots rang out in the city.

"Jupp!" A worker detained him as he hurried forward. "Jupp, they are fighting in Dortmund and everywhere. We are the only ones doing nothing. Why is that?" He had just come from the city. "In Essen there is nothing to be seen except uniforms and machine guns. The green-coats have taken possession of the slaughter-yard."

"By order of the Government," said Zermack jeeringly. "They were afraid it might run away!"

"Something must happen."

"Well, cheerio, Jupp. If it comes to that, I have an old gun which was left over from 1919. Don't let us delay any longer."

"Cheerio, Karl." They shook hands and parted.

The miners were sitting in the Meschede Inn. They were arguing and disputing. Some had already got drunk on cheap schnaps.

Zermack told them in a few words that Mahler was gone to the city, and sent them to the houses to summon their comrades. He himself hurried back.

In the room belonging to the local at Schiemann's a few men were already assembled. Among them was old Schenke, an iron-worker, who had gone from factory to factory for over thirty years. His face was as red as if it had been scalded. He looked as if he had made a meal of the glow of the Essen furnaces.

"The Majority Socialists have called off the general strike!" he called out when he saw Zermack.

"To hell with calling it off!"

"Ha, hum!"

"Is there something on at last?" Schenke's eyelids quivered with curiosity.

"Wait and see what news Mahler will bring."

Outside in the street rang the heavy tread of two policemen.

In the back room at Schiemann's sat the workers, and waited for the district representative, who was remaining an unaccountably long time in the city.

They smoked their pipes excitedly, spat on the floor with impatience, and sipped large glasses of flat beer which a comrade had brought in.

"He's staying there a long time."

"What can be up? They wouldn't make him rush to the city like that for nothing."

The door was thrown open with a jerk. It was Raup and Franz Kreusat.

"Here you are last!" murmured Zermack in relief.

"Why 'at last'?" asked Raup, and drew Franz to a chair beside him.

"Where have you been hiding all this time?"

"We were in the city. There was a shemozzle there. Some of them were half killed again."

Chairs were noisily drawn closer. "Did they shoot?"

"Did they! They used hand grenades and machine guns to defend themselves, otherwise they'd have got a packet."

"And they talk of a truce!" said one man indignantly.

"And the greencoats say they are neutral!" said a sarcastic voice.

"Like hell they are! They behave otherwise. Their neutrality is a swindle." Raup mimicked the gestures of the officer who had given the order to fire during the last collision, "'Clear the streets!' We took up the paving stones and threw them at them, but you can't do anything against these swine that way. Crack, crack, bang, bang, and the crowd lay down and howled like a lot of old women."

"Curs!" shouted a young butty. "Miserable curs!"

"They almost finished Fritz off." Kreusat now continued the story; he pointed to his friend, who was now silent. "We came to blows with them in Cattlemarket Street. He got a blow from a rifle butt on the shoulder, and another on the skull."

Fritz Raup gripped his injured shoulder at the memory. "I had no sooner seen them than I got one," he said dully.

The barman came in. "Take care and don't talk so loud; Müller, the split, is outside."

Zermack stood up heavily and clinked one glass against another. "Talk a little less loudly, comrades," he warned them.

They knew Müller.

"So that mongrel's sniffing round!"

"Order, comrades!" Zermack raised his hand and calmed their excitement.

CHAPTER VIII

M AHLER stood at the door looking at them attentively. The chairs scraped noisily back.

"It's Will!"

"Ah, here you are at last!"

The district representative looked at them, nodded and went to the chairman's table.

"Comrades." Mahler hesitated and scanned the faces around him closely. "Comrades, I notice that not all who are here are party members."

"What does that matter?" asked Schenke angrily.

"It won't do. We can't allow non-party people to take part in what we have to discuss as a party."

"Not so much chat!" said Zermack, making a face. "Spit it out quietly now. What is said here now will go no further."

"No." Mahler opposed him. "I shall not begin till those who are not party members have left the room."

There was a chorus of disapproval. Over a dozen men rose to their feet, looked angrily at the district representative and still hesitated. Mahler made no effort to detain them.

"Man, what a mess you're making of things!" said Zermack angrily. "These are reliable comrades whom you could trust completely, even if they don't carry party cards."

"It won't do. They must go outside. This meeting is for party members only."

Zermack looked helplessly at Raup. "You've let out more by your goings on than what you have still to say at

the meeting," he also muttered and looked reproachfully at Mahler.

"Go out now. We will soon call if we need you," said Mahler and still waited obstinately.

There were over fifteen young men there, hauliers and hewers from the colliery barracks. A party comrade who knew Michel had told him of the meeting. He had come in good faith, believing that no party member would have any objection.

"Then I'm going out too. Damn it, if you carry on like this already, the whole business is messed up in advance," he cried excitedly.

The door slammed to with a bang. Those who were left in the room now overwhelmed the district representative with reproaches.

"You've gone and upset the very people we shall want."

"Get on with the job and hold your tongues, blast you. When it is a matter of life and death we have got to take a little care. I have no desire to be shot or flogged to death before my time. Order now, comrades," returned Mahler.

The tumult died down. Franz Kreusat nudged his friend.
"Now it's coming! Look out."

"Words, idle words!" grumbled Raup.

"Come nearer," beckoned Mahler, "it's vital news. No hot air this time. We have to attack to-night."

They had all expected as much, yet the news robbed them of speech for a while.

"Naw, Will, don't kid us," said an old miner huskily. Raup also did not take it seriously.

Jupp Zermack, to whom Mahler had leant over and whispered something, now continued the discussion. "From what Will tells me, it is quite definite that we must attack to-night."

Mahler confirmed this speech by a nod. "It's the Cattlemarket, comrades; the greencoats have occupied it. We are to meet at one a.m. at the Mühlenkuhle. There we divide our forces. One section will go to Goldschmidt's

Factory and the other over the railway embankment and attack from the sawmill. That's how we are going to do it."

All stared. Schenke's red face became purple in his excitement. "God damn it! Have you guns enough then?"

Mahler looked round the circle of heads pressed so close to one another. "Who's got a gun?"

"Hold your noise, Bill!" Karl Powodny, a hewer from the Zollverein Pit, pointed with his arm to the window, where he thought he saw a shadow. "Not so loud, I tell you. The split's sniffing round."

All eyes turned to the darkened windows.

"Have you got a gun or pistol, any of you?" asked Mahler again in a lower voice.

"Those you chased out," grumbled Karl Powodny, "those from the barracks, they're the boys we want, they have got some."

"We'll send them word," replied Mahler. "You can go and talk to them right now."

"Now that you've just shown them the door! They'll have something to say to you."

"Don't make a fuss, Karl. You go out and tell them what is afoot. Arrange for them to come to the Mühlenkuhle and bring their guns with them."

Karl Powodny muttered something inaudible and cast an angry look at the district representative, swallowed the remainder of the beer in his glass for luck and stood up. "I will talk to them," he said, "but don't blame me if they won't come. You've only yourself to blame."

He looked again angrily towards the windows. "You look out!" he warned them and left the room.

"Anybody know anyone else who has guns?" asked Mahler. There were four men who had rifles and two had pistols.

"But no ammunition," one of them insisted.

"Then the ammunition must be shared out. The others

who have been summoned will perhaps bring some with them."

Paul Rentel, a young blaster from the Ernestine Pit, was sitting a little on one side and drumming with his thick knuckles on the table at each fresh notification of arms. He had already tried several times to get a word in.

"In case of accidents," he said now, "I have made a few hand grenades."

He smiled and screwed up his eyes cunningly like a dog lying in the sun. The others cleared their throats and burst into suppressed laughter. "You cunning devil, so you did outwit the police!" said one of them.

"I made the things for myself, not for the police," returned Rentel.

"Are they any use?" asked Mahler.

"The Cattlemarket will rock if one of my animals gets loose in it."

Rentel screwed up his eyes again. He had once let off one of his bombs for experimental purposes in the Mühlenkuhle. The plaster and wall-paper had crashed down in the houses in the neighbourhood of the colliery. People thought there had been an accident at the pit. The whole neighbourhood was panic-stricken. Later there began to spread abroad a rumour that Rentel had been experimenting with bombs. The police had locked him up and raided his house. They had found nothing incriminating and been obliged to let him go again. This incident was the cause of his complacent purring.

"A machine gun would be useful."

Mahler's regard swept the circle again.

"Philipp has one," said Rentel.

"Which Philipp?"

"That eccentric fellow from the hill. But he's a fellow who sticks to what he has got."

"Can he keep his mouth shut?"

"He has done so so far or he wouldn't have kept his machine gun long."

"Has he ammunition?"

"Has he?" Rentel grinned broadly. "You can't shoot with potato dumplings."

In spite of the danger there was another burst of laughter.

Mahler gazed apprehensively at the window. "Softly, comrades," he warned them.

"Rentel, you go off to that miner and tell him to be at the Mühlenkuhle, but take care the bluecoats don't catch you. They are on the alert day and night, and wasting no time dozing just now."

They waited for a bit while Mahler chatted with Zermack. The two were arguing over something. They could not hear what they were saying however.

"And we?" asked Franz Kreusat, who was sitting quietly beside Raup.

"We shall go with them, of course."

"But what shall we take with us?"

"If you haven't anything else, take a good long pick-handle."

"I'll do that."

Mahler and Jupp Zermack had apparently come to an agreement.

"Now then, off you go home without too much chat," said the district representative, and declared the meeting over.

"Fritz, will you and Jupp take over the leadership of the men who come to the Mühlenkuhle? A messenger will bring you further orders."

Fritz Raup coloured for a moment. He merely nodded. With lightning swiftness he thought of the danger involved. It was no easy task with their scanty weapons to rout a garrison which was armed to the teeth. "Have you any objection, Fritz?" asked Mahler with a faint undercurrent of mockery in his tones.

"I? No."

"To the job then."

They passed out. Franz Kreusat was with Raup. Mahler hesitated. "Kreusat!" he called.

Franz stopped and looked at the district representative.
"Come with me! I may need you."

"I would like to go home first," answered Franz. "My mother, you'll understand, grumbles a good deal. . . ."

Mahler gave a curt, mocking laugh. "When were you weaned?"

Franz' face went red as fire. He swallowed in confusion like a schoolboy.

"She can manage without you for one night. You are out of your swaddling clothes," said Mahler.

Franz Kreusat was infuriated by the district representative's teasing. "I don't know if you know Mother, otherwise you would talk rather differently."

"Not so loud, Franz. I don't wish your mother any harm. You're not the only one who won't be able to go to bed to-night. I only want you to run a few messages, that is why I want you with me."

CHAPTER IX

F RANZ KREUSAT looked round for Raup, who had gone off with Zermack. He stood alone with Mahler outside the inn. Opposite in the darkness a man was standing who seemed to be waiting for a tram.

"Come along," said Mahler and turned the corner into the Ernestinenstrasse. Franz Kreusat followed him rather against his will.

The man at the tram stop waited till both were in the badly-lighted street and then followed them unobtrusively.

Once Mahler looked behind him. The man stayed by a fence as if he were relieving himself. In this way he was able to see without exciting suspicion how Mahler and Kreusat disappeared into one of the houses in the Ernestinenstrasse. He then walked on and remained standing in front of the house as if he were eavesdropping, bending forward towards the window. After a time he went off to the neighbouring police station.

"What is up now?" asked Frau Mahler, who, sleepy as she was, had waited up for her husband.

"Go to bed. We have work to do to-night."

"What is it then?"

"Don't be nosey," he answered sullenly. "Sit down, boy," he said to Franz, motioning him to a chair.

"It's always the same," said Frau Mahler angrily, as she placed a pan of fried potatoes before him and went sullenly into the bedroom.

"You see, she acts just the same as my mother," said Franz a trifle maliciously.

"Women are like that," said Mahler without emotion. He started on the potatoes with enjoyment. "Have you

eaten yet ? " he asked with his mouth full, and pushed the rest over to Franz. " Have some with me."

" I've already had something," said Franz, although he had had no time to eat anything after his return from the city.

Towards eleven o'clock two men came to Mahler's house. They looked mistrustfully at Franz.

Mahler, who was putting up the shutters on the window, spoke : " He will be our messenger."

Nevertheless the men did not talk much. One was a black-haired man of forty who did not look like a worker but more like an official. His intelligent, somewhat deep-set eyes under their bushy brows were lively, and inspired confidence. " We shan't have to talk in the kitchen, shall we ? " he asked the district representative.

" No, we can easily go into another room," he replied, and opened the door of a neighbouring apartment. The black-haired man went in, followed by his companion. They remained standing there in the darkness waiting for Mahler.

" You stay in the kitchen, Franz, and warn us if anything happens," Mahler ordered.

Franz, who had nearly fallen asleep, gave a startled assent.

Mahler took a candle from a shelf in the kitchen and went into the room where the two men were talking in whispers. A match flared and the door was shut. A minute later Franz heard fragments of muffled speech. Often they seemed to be arguing. The dark man must have been a leader, since the other two were silent when he spoke.

" But if the business goes wrong," Franz heard the district representative say. " If . . . begin to be sent . . . "

The big clock on the opposite wall ticked loudly in the silence of the room. Its ticking seemed to fuse with fragments of whispered conversation from the other room. Franz took pains not to listen. He tried to look out through the chinks in the shutters. In the street the darkness was

impenetrable except for small twinkling points of light a long way off. From the neighbouring room came a low buzz of conversation.

"Mamma!" cried a child fretfully, "Hu-ha, hu-ha," while the woman snored in a half-slumber. "Tick, tock, tick tock," went the clock. Its hands pointed to ten to twelve.

"It will soon be midnight," reflected Franz. He thought of his mother. She would not be asleep, but waiting up for him. He saw her crouched as was her wont on her seat beside the stove, staring with reproachful eyes at the door. She would not let him alone and called him softly. He thought he was dreaming, heard only the whispering next door gradually dying away and the regular breathing of the woman ever further off, and the ticking of the clock. He was no longer at Mahler's.

There was a knock at the door. He started: "God damn it! I must have dozed off."

Franz rubbed the sleep from his eyes. The muffled conversation was still going on in the other room. The hands of the clock showed that it was well past midnight. He was ashamed of having fallen asleep. He got up. As in a dream he heard again a sharp rapping at the door.

"Open the door, Herr Mahler!"

In his confusion Franz called aloud: "Will, there's someone at the door!"

"Hold your tongue," growled Mahler, who appeared, white as chalk, in the doorway. Behind him were the other two.

"Away with the guns," whispered the dark man's companion excitedly.

"Nonsense!" the other contradicted him, "would you give yourselves into the hands of a few flatfeet?"

"Open the door! We're police!" called a commanding voice from outside.

"That's that damned split Müller," growled Mahler.

At the bedroom door Frau Mahler appeared with a screaming child on her arm.

"There you are standing there like a lot of oxen. Get out of the window. I'll keep them in conversation."

"And run right into their mouths. They've surrounded the house," said Mahler, who had been listening at the window.

"While we were sitting in there. Damn it! It's all up now," said the dark man angrily. Just then an extra heavy blow burst open the door.

"Hands up!" Half a dozen men in blue uniforms rushed in. Their helmets glittered in the lamplight.

"What do you want?"

Frau Mahler pushed her way with the child in front of the men, who raised their hands hesitatingly.

"You go to bed," said Müller.

"It is night time!" screamed the woman at him, forgetting the position.

"Then it's no time for holding meetings like this," returned the spy with a sneer, and beckoned to the police who were standing in perplexity near the door.

They went through the pockets of the prisoners and found two pistols and some ammunition.

"What do you want with these?" asked Müller.

"Wouldn't you like to know?" roared Mahler.

"Be quiet," said Müller. "We know already. Off to the police station with you!"

"What are you doing? To the station?" shrieked his wife. "You goddam swine. Hell take you! You're drunk! Go down on your bended knees and thank God that the workers are as stupid as they are, oh!— I could spit in your faces!"

The plain-clothes man pushed her on one side. "Come on now. Off you go!"

"Don't you lay hands on my wife, you—" "

The veins swelled in Mahler's forehead.

"Come along now, Herr Mahler. It doesn't mean anything," whispered one of the bluecoats to him.

Franz had watched the scene with his eyes almost starting

from his head. He hardly understood what was happening. The dark man was the calmest. His calmness gave Franz confidence as well.

“ What, aren’t you coming with us ? ”

A shove from behind assisted Franz into the dark entrance hall.

“ What’s the matter ? ” he asked.

“ You get on.” A second shove.

“ You damned monkey ! ”

Franz grabbed at the policeman. He received another push and felt the nozzle of a pistol pressed against his elbow. Frau Mahler went on abusing them. The baby screamed and cried.

“ Come along.” The dark man drew the angry Franz along with him.

CHAPTER X

"**A**ND now," said Franz to himself as they marched to the police station, "when Mother hears of this she'll raise Cain. It's a bad business. Perhaps we shall be sentenced to a long term of imprisonment or worse. . . ."

He felt a cold shiver run down his spine.

"They are going to shoot us," said the dark man who was walking beside Mahler. He said it quietly and without excitement.

"What was that?" Franz felt his feet grow heavy. He walked as though they were weighted with lead.

"How could you be so stupid?" a policeman near Franz said to them reproachfully. "Do you think it's nice for us to have to put fellows we know into quod?"

Mahler looked venomously at the speaker. "You . . . you'd like to help them to strangle us. But don't rejoice too soon, something else may happen."

"Quiet there!" called Müller.

"Don't think you're gaining anything by this deed of valour," continued Mahler. "The Greencoats will laugh at you and maybe give you more kicks than halfpence for it."

The policeman looked angry. "That's not our business. Orders are orders. We can only do what we're told."

At the police station they were again searched thoroughly but nothing more was found on them. Müller went to the telephone.

"What's he going to do now?" Mahler asked one of the bluecoats. The latter shrugged his shoulders without answering.

"He's speaking to headquarters," said the dark man. The prisoners got uneasy.

"Now it's getting cheerful!" murmured Mahler.

The plain-clothes man hung up the receiver and said to the others, "The prisoners are to be taken to Essen."

Then he left the guard-room with a sneer on his face.

"Isn't this a hoax?" asked Mahler hoarsely, with an effort. He sought affirmation from the faces of the police.

"You should be more careful," said one of them. "It is dangerous in these times to talk about storming the Cattlemarket and so on."

The dark man smiled mockingly. His strong white teeth glittered. "It is even more dangerous in these times to imprison workers," he said.

"That is not our business," replied the other angrily. "Orders are orders. We have got to do what we are told."

The prisoners were allowed to sit down. Permission was given them to smoke.

"Have a cigarette?" asked a policeman and offered Franz his leather case.

"First you baton us down, and then you try to . . ." Franz turned away in disgust. The attempts at friendliness by the bluecoats made him furious. "Damned crawlers!"

It was an uncomfortable half-hour. The police were visibly relieved when a division of special constables arrived. At the same moment there entered two more bluecoats, bringing with them Karl Powodny and another youth.

"Karl! Well, I'm damned!" The appearance of these two additional prisoners dumbfounded the district representative.

Karl looked at him sharply. "Didn't I warn you what would happen? The chaps you chased out of the room have been blabbing."

He was carrying a 98 mm. bore rifle slung over his shoulder with a washing line instead of a sling.

"Give us that gun here!" said the guard-room sergeant.

"You see!" grumbled Karl Powodny as he slipped the

weapon off his shoulders. Then particulars about them were taken down.

"Ready?" asked the leader of the specials, who was waiting impatiently.

"All right," said the sergeant, and avoided looking the prisoners in the face. "I can't alter things, you people . . ." he began.

"Not now," returned Mahler angrily. "You louse!"

"Come on now. You're going with us to Essen," said the leader of the specials.

"And a whole company is coming with us! Ha, ha! Are you as frightened of us as all that, you heroes?"

The rage of the district representative knew no bounds. "You're afraid they'll dust your jackets for you! Can't you take an armoured car with you to be on the safe side?"

"We're only doing our duty," said the leader, apparently a master butcher. He had a fat red face and twinkling little pig's eyes.

"Duty! Don't deceive yourselves, you swine!"

"Quick march!"

The prisoners thought of resistance. The leader gave his specials a signal and they got their rifles ready to fire.

"Quick march!" called the leader in threatening tones.

"Come on, comrades," said the dark man. Karl Powodny went out with Mahler. "Don't you think it's your fault?" he scolded him.

"Let me alone now or I'll do something silly," growled Mahler. "I'll be giving one of the swine one in the jaw."

They had to march two deep. Eight specials followed them with rifles at the ready. Franz fell half asleep as he strode along. He still believed that the whole affair would turn out to be a crude kind of practical joke. They must meet comrades somewhere on the road, and the whole matter would be cleared up in another way. He strained his eyes into the darkness. Here and there shadows vanished before them.

They had soon passed the city boundaries. The town buildings loomed before them like an open grey-blue sack. Only at the railway crossing were lamps burning sleepily. Metal signboards rattled in a gentle breeze. Further on, between the railway lines, which wound like glittering snakes towards the Königin Elisabeth Colliery, twinkled one small red light. On the right of the street, like a sleeping giant, lay the Freistein Brickworks. Like arms raised aloft to affirm an oath, its slender, fragile brick chimneys stood out against the cloud-covered horizon, along which small points of light glimmered like stars. Somewhere the whistle of an engine gave a shrill shriek. It roused the silent marchers, sunk in thought as they were, from their painful reflections. They hesitated as if at a given signal and looked at one another in perplexity.

"Quick march!" They heard the anxious voice of the leader of the specials.

"Um!" sighed Mahler. He shook his throbbing head and repeated, "Um, so that's that!"

"March faster!"

He turned his head towards the special. "Are you nervous? What have you got to do that you are afraid of not being there in time?"

It gave him comfort to frighten the worried specials.

"There are six of us," thought Franz Kreusat; "if we all made a dash at once we need not be here!"

He looked over his shoulder to one side where one of the specials was walking. He was holding his gun loosely under his arm. Franz pushed his way nearer to wrest the gun from him by force, but he must have made a suspicious movement, for the special stopped a moment and packed his weapon more firmly.

"Forward!"

They were now in the city. Franz let his eyes wander over the streets through which they passed. It was in vain. Not a friendly face anywhere; there were only uniformed men and the timid but inquisitive faces of the specials.

When they had traversed part of Cattlemarket Street, bathed in the light of the moon, which had forced its way brazenly and impatiently through the clouds, the Town Hall came in sight. On its broad, high steps stood uniformed men. Others were running excitedly through the surrounding streets. All were armed to the teeth.

“ Ahah ! ”

“ Where are these gallows-birds from ? ”

“ Arrested in Stoppenberg.”

“ Armed ? ”

“ Rather ! ”

“ In you go, you bastards ! ”

To the accompaniment of such taunts the prisoners stumbled up the steps. “ Hands up ! Can’t you keep ’em up ? ” Kicks.

“ Stop, don’t kick us ! ” said Mahler furiously. Someone tripped Karl Powodny up and kicked him in the back. He fell with a curse on the steps. The greencoats laughed aloud. They struck at him so that he fell again and again. “ Will you run, you carrion ! Get a move on ! ” they yelled.

In the corridor stood a line of greencoats armed with rubber tubing and cudgels.

“ Forward march ! ”

Blows rained on their heads ; they bowed their backs and put their hands and arms in front of their faces to protect themselves.

“ Will you run, you red swine ! ” And there were more blows.

“ No, God damn you ! ” snarled Mahler and tried to protect himself. He ran zigzag, springing from side to side. He leapt from the blows, ducking, and so lessened their force. By this means he confused the greencoats and landed just behind the dark man in a room swarming with uniformed men.

Before Franz Kreusat stood the dark man’s companion, who was wearing a docker’s jacket. Blows rained down on him.

"Look out, now for the tall fellow!" called another. A kick pushed Franz down the lane of men. He fell on his hands and knees, crouching.

"Will you run, you lousy swine?" Blows and yet more blows. Franz roared with pain and sprang up.

"Will you run, you rat?"

"Are you mad?"

Sparks flashed before his eyes. He staggered along the line of tormentors amid a hail of shoves, blows and kicks, half-conscious. Over his injured face ran something wet, right over his left eye.

"Get on, you bastard!" Another shove and he flew into the guard-room right into the middle of the greencoats.

"What, you'll lay hands on me?" A mighty blow from a fist struck Franz Kreusat on the jaw and felled him to the ground like a sack of potatoes. There he lay and moaned with pain. This last blow had made him bite his tongue. It felt like an enormous sponge in his mouth, which was full of blood. He spat out the blood.

"You behave yourself, my lad!" rasped one of the greencoats to him. "You behave yourself or we'll discipline you! You're not used to discipline, are you, eh, what?"

Franz Kreusat again spat out blood. He awoke slowly from a dull stupor and felt his injured limbs. He felt as if his head would burst any moment. Near him the man in the docker's jacket was groaning. His face was all swollen up. His right eye was injured by a blow and he was in agony.

"Stand up!" A greencat prodded Franz with his boot. He got up and spat blood again.

"I'll teach you to spit blood on the floor!" threatened the greencat. Another with silver-laced epaulets was by now interrogating the angry district representative. The dark man stood on one side with his head turned to the wall. Mahler had had a blow on the head. His lips had got unnaturally thick.

"What were you up to to-night?"

"Never you mind!"

"If you get cheeky there'll be trouble."

"Strike me dead then!"

"They will deal with your crowd, make no mistake about that!" The greencoat struck the table with the flat of his hand. "We'll give you Cattlemarket!"

Mahler got a push. "Right turn, you dog!"

"Well, have you thought things over?" The dark man got a push. He turned round. His face was scratched, but he did not seem in the least excited. Only his dark eyes glowed with a fire of hatred.

"I have nothing to think over," he replied.

"I am asking you what was planned for to-night." The greencoat got up and walked in front of the dark man. The eyes of the two men blazed at one another. Two deadly enemies measured each other's forces, weighed their powers for a fraction of a second.

"Well, will you make up your mind soon?"

"I will not."

"I'll make you talk in a moment, you . . .!" The greencoat raised his fist threateningly. The dark man stood as if glued to the spot and looked at his angry opponent under frowning brows, glaring at him as one glares at a vicious dog. The greencoat's fist fell as if it had lost its strength. He turned back to the desk. "We know enough to hang you," he thundered.

A lieutenant came in. "How far have you got?" he asked.

"The swine won't talk." The guard-room sergeant stood at attention. The other greencos did the same.

Franz Kreusat, who was watching the scene, could have believed himself in the army again. There was the same chin on collar, fingers on the seams of the trousers, toes turned out at an angle of 90 degrees and heels together. He saw a mocking smile hover on the hitherto sombre face of the dark man.

Apparently the young officer saw it too. He stepped

over to the dark man with his cheeks afire and screamed in a high voice, "What are you grinning at, eh? You'll laugh the other side of your face soon. Make no mistake about that. If there is one shot fired to-night, then you'll get something. We know who you are. You'll not be shot, but flogged to death."

The dark man's face was impassive. He still looked mockingly at the youngster. He balanced on his toes, made an elegant wheel towards the door, glanced at the other prisoners and said in a high voice, "You're a nice lot, aren't you? We'll teach you to make a 'putsch'!"

When the lieutenant was gone the guard-room sergeant yelled to the prisoners, "Right turn! And if any of you make any noise there will be trouble."

There they stood like puppets. Beside Franz, who looked sideways at him, was Karl Powodny. He also turned his eyes to look at Franz. The greencoats chatted for a while over the incident, and then a party of them left the guard-room. The rest began to doze. Off and on one of them looked at the prisoners.

The attack was timed for two o'clock. Feverishly they counted the chimes, stared at the grey-plastered wall or touched their injured limbs. Franz attempted to feel his skull. With a sob of pain he let his arm fall. A policeman had struck him there with his rubber tubing. Thirst tortured him, and his bitten tongue nearly drove him mad with pain. It must be nearly two o'clock. Doors banged in the Town Hall. Sharp commands rang out on all sides, and the measured tread of returning patrols was heard; in spite of the lateness of the hour there was constant coming and going. Apparently they were in the highest state of preparedness for an attack.

Meanwhile the prisoners stood there and could hardly contain themselves for excitement. Their tired limbs bent and quivered. Mahler swayed as if he had fallen asleep standing. There came the sound of snoring from the desk, harsh and broken. The same noise came from the benches

where some of the police lay huddled, their belts buckled and in full uniform.

Karl Powodny had several times attempted to make signs to Franz. "Hist!" Franz looked in his direction.

"Franz!"

"Yes?"

"Franz, they'll shoot us. You see?"

"It looks like it."

"Franz, if you're lucky and get out of this, go to my wife, but don't frighten her, will you? Franz . . ."

"And if you're lucky, Karl, see my mother. She is already more dead than alive."

One of the greencoats noticed the whispering. "Will you hold your tongues!" he snarled.

They were silent and expected blows. They did not get them this time. The greencat lit a cigarette, yawning. He muttered crossly. In a short time there was only the laboured breathing of the injured men to be heard, punctuated by the snoring from the desk and bench. Franz now fell into a half doze where he stood. The same thing had happened to him before in the trenches. He heard everything that went on around him but only as through a mist.

"Pang, pang, pang, pang!" The clock struck four high notes. Then "klong, klong," two low notes.

Franz forced his eyes open. "Two o'clock!" whispered Karl Powodny beside him. "Franz, just one shot and it's all over with us!"

CHAPTER XI

THROUGH the dark streets leading from Stoppenberg the people summoned to the Mühlenkuhle moved like shadows.

“Hello !”

“Here, Jupp !”

“Don’t clatter your gun like that, Stefan. This way, comrades.”

In a doorway on the Grabenstrasse stood Jupp Zermack and beckoned them in one after another. “Go on, the rest of you, into the next doorway !”

“Hush !”

“What’s happened now ?”

“A police patrol !”

“Brr, they’ll catch us here.”

“Are you afraid ?”

“Damn you, hold your tongue !”

“Ah !”

“Shut up !”

They heard the patrol tramp nearer. At the cross-roads the police halted and flashed their lamps. The light from these veered dangerously from house to house and flashed into the doorways. The workers pressed as far back into the recess as they could and carefully closed the door. It creaked a little.

“God damn it ! They’re coming here !”

“Then we’ll put up a fight for it !”

The torches were extinguished. The bluecoats tramped on further. Jupp Zermack and his companions were just about to leave the house when the bluecoats returned in

haste. Without looking round they marched along the dark street towards the church.

"What do they want?"

"They've smelt a rat!"

"It looks like it. Come on, let's take the short cut over the footpath in the field, the others will be waiting for us," replied Zermack, and was the first to leave the house.

At the Bauer Horn they met Raup, very much out of breath. "Do you know what's happened now? They've pinched Mahler and Franz Kreusat!"

"Are you mad?" Zermack felt his legs give under him. "You must be joking."

"No, Jupp. They are pinched, I tell you. And Karl Powodny and another comrade too."

Zermack gulped with excitement. "How did that happen?"

"Yes—how?"

"Someone must have blabbed."

They stood there, not knowing what to do. Zermack was anxious about those in the Mühlenkuhle. "Well, that's how things should go if we want the Cattlemarket!"

"Yea, no monkey tricks!" grumbled a miner.

"Well, on to the Mühlenkuhle now!" said Zermack.

They advanced at a trot. The dark footpath through the field swallowed them as if into a gaping mouth. On the way Fritz Raup told them how he had seen the prisoners being led away. "I almost gave myself away," he said. "I stood behind the house and couldn't help them. A whole section, armed to the teeth, took them off. I went on to look for you then, and ran till my tongue hung out. Now they are gone!"

Zermack cursed. "The devil blast it! Just our luck!"

The others cursed too. "Perhaps they've copped all those at the Mühlenkuhle and we're running into a trap."

"Where are we going now then? Take care they don't get us by the ears too!"

"Don't get the wind up," replied Jupp angrily. "Hit anyone who gets in your way."

"Good advice, Jupp, in the darkness! We're running into a noose."

There were some fifty workers assembled in the Mühlenkuhle. They could hear the noise they were making as they waited impatiently from some little way off.

"Halt, who goes there?" called a sentry.

Zermack found himself looking down the muzzle of a gun.
"I'm Zermack," he replied.

"What have you been doing then? We've been waiting a whole hour. Have your guts oozed out of your boots?"

"Mahler has been arrested."

"What's that?" They thronged round the newcomers.
"Mahler arrested? You're not kidding?"

"It's true, comrades." Raup pushed forward. "I myself saw them taking him away and five others too."

The noise ceased. There was a profound silence. They could hear their hearts beating. "Arrested?"

"And what now?"

"We must call it off."

"God damn it."

"They'll shoot them if we do anything," said Raup.

"What do you think, Jupp?"

They all looked at Zermack. He had no reply to give them. He gazed over towards the Cattlemarket and hunched his shoulders as if he were cold. "Hm, yes."

"Come. Jupp. It's no good dozing here, that won't help us." Raup came towards him as he sat crouched on a stone.

"It would be folly to attempt anything now. The cat's out of the bag."

Zermack stood up. The men gathered round him despondently, they were grumbling to one another. The news of the arrests had made them feel insecure. "The green-coats have some information at any rate, Jupp. You'll

see, the fat's in the fire; there'll be trouble with a vengeance."

"We're running into danger."

"We'd better give it up, Jupp. What do you think?"

Some of them looked apprehensively towards the dark footpath over the field to the suburb.

"Dismiss! Go to your homes!" It was hard for Zermack. He said it dully. The prospects of carrying out a successful offensive appeared non-existent to him. This feeling weighed him down like a load of stones. His lack of confidence communicated itself to the others. Silent and dejected they disappeared.

Jupp Zermack still stood there irresolute and stared gloomily in the direction of the Market. "What now?" he asked.

"Wait! said Raup.

"Wait! Hm!"

They came to the streets again. There stood the tenements, heavy and lifeless. On the horizon shreds of clouds were scudding across the sky. Somewhere in the tenements a woman screamed. Doubtless an addition to the family, no rare occurrence in this grey proletarian world.

"Where are we going?"

"Come to my place." They walked on in silence, side by side.

Frau Zermack opened the door to them. "Hello, what has happened? I thought you were going to the Cattle-market."

"They've pinched Mahler."

"Deary me—Mahler? How did that happen?"

"Yes, how did it happen? Search me! They've got Franz Kreusat too."

"Oh, Lord!" Frau Zermack's mouth opened wide in amazement. "God have mercy on them!"

"Light the fire and go back to bed."

"Well, someone must have let something out. Someone

must have blabbed. Good God. And Frau Kreusat is so wrapt up in that boy. There will be a fuss!"

The plump little woman could not keep calm. She knelt down before the hearth and blew upon the dying embers as she talked. A ball of soot struck her full in the face.

"Poof, poof!" she spat out the soot. "This filthy brute of a fireplace! And we'll have to wait long enough for a new one." She blew the flickering flame. "The damn swine, they find out everything, they snout everything out." She put on water to heat and shook some "blend" into the coffee mill from a paper bag.

Fritz Raup stared through the dusty window into the night.

"Keep your pecker up, Raup. Our time will come again. They can't eat the boys," she added.

"No, but they can put them against the wall and shoot them. They don't trouble much to-day about whether it's legal or not," rejoined Raup.

Zermack remained standing. "They wouldn't be the first to whom that has happened. But we are such sentimental idiots. We had them in our hands in 1918. We could have exterminated them, but then the talkers came along and we weakened and forgave the scoundrels all their sins because they were so clever as to appeal to the humanity in us. And now the brutes are devouring our men!"

Frau Zermack only understood half of this. "Ah," she cried, "they are brutes indeed!" In the bedroom the youngest of the Zermack's began to cry. "You see," she called back to them, "that's how it is if you stay away a minute. The wretched kids are sucking me dry!"

CHAPTER XII

FRAU KREUSAT did not sleep. She waited up. Every few minutes she went to the window and looked out into the darkness. Every time there was a noise on the stairs she ran out with an oil lamp, thinking that it was Franz coming. So she went on till the grey dawn came. Then she felt that she could no longer bear her anxiety alone. She went over to Martin's bed and shook him awake. "Listen, Martin. The boy isn't here yet. It's morning now. What can have become of him?"

Martin slowly opened his eyes, heavy with sleep. He blinked at her stupidly : "What do you want?"

"Franz is not home yet." Now he understood. "He will soon come in. He is old enough to find his own way home." Martin turned over to his other side.

"How can you be so indifferent?" she cried. "You go on snoring while I am breaking my heart wondering where he is."

She sighed and went into the kitchen. Martin got uneasy. With an effort he rubbed the sleep from his eyes, stood up heavily and reached for his trousers which were hanging over the back of a chair. Painfully he drew them over his hairy, bony legs and stood up. He looked through the half-shuttered window into the street. It was empty. A cart rattled along somewhere. Oppressed by the close, bad smell of the room, he opened the window and drank in eagerly the fresh, frosty air.

The flames of the coke oven were not to be seen. They were extinguished. The steam hammer at the works, which could ordinarily be heard from some distance, was silent. The whine and throb of the engines was heard no more.

And this silence had already lasted five days. Every morning till now he had wakened up to it with indifference ; to-day it gripped him. For years he had been wont to look out on the smoking chimneys of the factories and colliery and their yellow and red tongues of flame. He had grown used to the measured beat of the iron pulse which showed that work was in progress. And now a mighty fist seemed to have clutched the wheels, hawsers, presses, cranes and engines ; to have taken hold of the throats of the mines and factories. And up till now he had not looked at it in this way. Everything lay stark and still and silent simply because the workers had willed that it should be so. This silence thrilled him, it was the silence of the general strike.

Now he recognized the magnitude of the struggle. Something quite unwonted shook him and roused him, weak as he was, from his usual apathy. Part of his old worn-out strength came back to him. He felt for a second one with the mighty will outside, which had forbidden the work to go on, and bade the mighty giant stand still.

He looked once more over towards the colliery, then he tottered into the kitchen where his wife was sitting by the fire staring into the embers. She moved her lips as if in prayer.

“ I knew this would happen,” she said plaintively.

“ It is the general strike, mother.”

“ What has the general strike to do with him ? ” she screamed, and her voice drowned his. Full of hatred she looked Martin in the face. “ You are to blame too because you encouraged him in his folly.”

“ Don’t talk like that. Look outside ! The pits are empty. Everything which brought up coal and iron is at a standstill. It is the young men who have brought this about. Do you understand—the young men ? ”

“ Do you know what he is doing ? Where is he ? What has happened to him ? It’s nearly morning. Zermack and Raup have talked him over. They have turned his head.”

Martin defended himself angrily against her attack.

"What's that you're saying. If they were only all like Raup and Zermack—two real men ! You are blind. Look outside. You hear no siren. The engines are still ! The pit isn't working ! See that colliery in which I've crouched for thirty years and swallowed coal and stone dust ! They've put an end to it ! They don't want to die quietly but are defending themselves. I can't do so any more. I can't, but the boy can !"

She was appalled by his impassioned outbreak. She blinked timidly at him and tortured herself trying to understand what he meant. For a fleeting moment something seemed to gleam, to flash past like a streak of lightning in her understanding, but the spark was extinguished. "What has it got to do with him ?" she defended herself obstinately. "He should have kept out of it."

Raup was still at Zermack's. Four hours had passed. They had spoken little during those four hours.

"We shall never get any further like this." Raup suddenly roused himself. "This waiting and hanging round drives me crazy," he grumbled.

"What would you do ?" asked Zermack, and was glad Raup no longer kept silent. This silence had been harder for him than many a layer of stone in the mine. The hours had crept along slowly, endlessly, damning all hope.

"The party must do something, make inquiries at police headquarters."

"Do you mean the 'Independents' ?"

Raup said no more. He well knew the timid attitude of Raudinger, secretary of the local branch, who was under the influence of the Social Democrats, and far more timid than many a Social Democratic worker.

"The only way is—to attack."

"You have seen how we get on," murmured Raup.

"In spite of everything, we must try once more—better prepared."

Raup shrugged his shoulders. "It will be more difficult

now. The greencoats are on the look-out. We must have more guns."

"Arms!" Zermack thought of the numerous machine guns which were mounted in the centre of the city, of the armoured cars which defended the Town Hall, bristling with threatening weapons. And what had they? Half a dozen rifles and a handful of ammunition. Not enough to kill a rabbit. And with this they had wanted to make a night attack, and would certainly have done so if the arrests had not been made!

This snatch of conversation ended as all the others had up till now. "Arms!" That was the thought which filled them both to the exclusion of all others. "Where can we get arms?"

Zermack went over to the window. He looked up the street, which was just beginning to fill. Searchingly he examined the grey walls of the slaughter-yard where all lay apparently in complete quietude. A lorry rumbled along the street and shook the tenements till it set all the crockery and fire-irons dancing and clattering. They were used to this and paid no attention to it. They overlooked also a tap on the door which was twice repeated. Only when the door opened and Frau Kreusat, with a pale face, and looking as if she had been up all night, appeared framed in the doorway, did they spring up and gaze in bewilderment at their unexpected visitor.

"Where is Franz?" she asked and looked with hostility at the two men. "Where is my boy?" she asked again. "What has happened to him? Why don't you answer me?"

"He'll come back," replied Zermack.

"I intend to know where the boy is," she repeated obstinately, standing at the door. "He's been out all night and he doesn't do that; only since he has been running round with you."

"Franz has been arrested." It was hard for Zermack, but he hated lying. At this juncture anyway it would not

have done to have lied. Raup quailed visibly. Now the fat was in the fire.

" You see ! " She could say no more. She swallowed as if she were choking. " You see ! I knew it. He has you, his damned friends, to thank for this," she said at last in an unnatural voice.

Zermack went as red as fire. " Franz is not the only one arrested. Mahler and some other comrades are with him. Be patient till . . . "

" Patient ! " She stood with arms outstretched before them. " Patient, you body-snatchers ! "

Raup went white to the lips. " That too now ! " he muttered.

" You are talking nonsense, Frau Kreusat," said Zermack huskily. " We are not body-snatchers. Devil take it, are you mad ? "

She laughed like a maniac. Then her face stiffened again. " Well, that's the end of him. Now you've finished. You've turned his head. If *you* were discontented, leave others in peace. Why haven't you been arrested ? Because you are not so stupid, isn't that it ? " she choked, spat something out and staggered. There was a groan. Foam welled from her mouth while her haggard face went purple. She groped for something to hold on to and fell like a sack into the arms of Raup, who had sprung quickly forward.

He laid her gently on the floor and gazed at her. Frau Kreusat overcame her attack of dizziness and tried to get up.

Zermack came forward and helped her up. " You mustn't excite yourself so, Frau Kreusat ! " said the giant helplessly. " We can't help it. If we haven't been arrested, it's pure chance. To-morrow, perhaps the day after to-morrow, we shall have to make other sacrifices. Either face the guns or go back beaten and defeated to the pits."

She supported herself against the table and looked at them with lustreless eyes. " Who ordered you to run into

danger?" She made a few weary steps towards the door.
" You've got what you wanted."

Then she staggered out like a drunken woman. Raup looked at Zermack. " She called us body-snatchers!"

" She doesn't know what she's saying." Zermack excused her. " After all, she is his mother!"

CHAPTER XIII

OUTSIDE the street was now full of life. Carts rattled along and passed one another. Motors raced past hooting. Voices of men and women could be heard, scolding and joking, and the laughter and merry voices of children. The sun rose like a large ball of fire over the collieries.

"I'm off!" said Raup with decision. He took up his cap, put on his military overcoat and held out his hand to Zermack. "Cheerio, Jupp."

"Are you going?" asked Zermack, roused from his brooding.

"I ought to have gone long ago. My wife will also be waiting up for me."

"Yes; do you know, Fritz, rather than another night like this I'd go out somewhere with a gun in my hand. Better go under fire even if I do stop a bullet than another night like last night. . . ."

"I wouldn't prefer that. We were so unprepared, Jupp. Now we know how it is we'll manage things differently in future. Cheerio!"

Raup was off. Zermack heard his firm tread echo through the house. Now he was alone. Suddenly the room seemed too close for him. He threw open the window and expanded his chest, breathing deeply. Holding this deep breath he stretched himself till his joints cracked. With a tremendous effort he threw off the weariness and stiffness which lay heavy upon him. Outside was life. The sharp air of the March morning got hold of him, pulsed through him and shook into wakefulness the strength sleeping within him.

"It will be a beautiful day." Zermack's eyes lost their

gloomy expression. "There is spring in the air. We'll soon be able to go out to the country."

Somewhere a shot rang out. The sound brought him back to reality. He shut the window with a jerk. "The comrades are waiting. Are they still alive or are they already dead?"

The sun climbed higher and higher. Jupp Zermack threw himself on the bed just as he was. He did not sleep. He had just one thought—How can we get guns? Guns enough to drive the greencoats out of the city and free the comrades if they are still alive and avenge them if they are dead.

In the street Raup met a miner who had been at the Mühlenkuhle the night before. "Is it Fritz? How goes it, Fritz? Any news of the comrades?"

"No."

"Will they shoot them?"

Raup hastily choked back a coarse expression. That must not happen. He had been thinking the same thought himself all the time, but was shocked when his companion voiced it. "They will defend themselves, Boris." His words had an uncertain ring.

"The Spartacus movement is being trailed, comrade," said his companion, who had taken part in the struggle as a sailor in January, 1919. "I know the signs. You need not deceive yourself, Fritz!"

They walked along together for a time. Just then a cyclist raced up to them. "Hullo there, which is the nearest route to the city?" he called. His face was grey with dust and his body steamed in spite of the cold.

"You'll soon be there. Just follow the tram lines," replied Raup in astonishment. "But take care you don't run up against a machine gun!"

"Oho," laughed the cyclist, "they won't be there much longer. The Dortmund men are on the march and disarming the police everywhere. The workers from Hagen and Witten are coming too. They'll be here soon."

He leapt back on to the saddle of his machine and dashed off. The news had so shaken Raup that it had left him weak all over.

"Heh, there, wait a moment, comrade!" he called after the cyclist, who however had already vanished round the corner of the street.

"Hurrah!" danced the sailor. "Raup, my boy, what have you to say now!"

Raup left him standing there and ran with huge strides back to the tenement which he had just left. He sprang up the stairs three at a time laughing and cursing with excitement. He threw the door open with such force that it banged against the dresser standing behind it. "Jupp, Juppie, where is Jupp?"

"Eh, my God, what's up now? What is it?" called Frau Zermack and stumbled into the room with a crying baby in her arms.

"Well, well." She put the child on the floor. "Jupp, do you hear, Jupp? Well, well!"

Zermack had already heard the noise on the stairs.

"Look out, here's Raup again. What's the news?" Then he heard him say, or rather splutter: "The Dortmund workers have risen and disarmed the police. Things are moving fast." And he told him hastily what he had heard from the cyclist.

Jupp Zermack stood there with his eyes shining like a boy's. "My God, if it's true!" He longed to say something but choked with joy.

"Oh! why don't you say something?" Frau Zermack found words instead of Raup. "Why shouldn't it be true? Things can't go on as they are." The little woman began to shout. She beat a loud tattoo with two saucepan lids. She smiled all over her broad, merry face and chattered again excitedly. "Now there's something on for certain. The greencoats'll get a proper hiding, and the bluecoats deserve just as much. They're all alike. They bow down to them as is over them and trample on them as is

beneath them. Now squeeze them till their buttons burst ! ”

Zermack rapidly took stock of the position. “ Off you go, Fritz, and tell the other fellows to collect whatever arms they’ve got.”

“ Let him first collect his wits ! ” scolded his wife.

Raup heard no more but dashed out of the room. On the first floor he nearly ran into the stalwart Frau Naumann, who was coming up with the *Volkszeitung* newspaper.

“ Hi, there ! are you crazy, you fool ? ” she grumbled. She gulped with fright and shouted, “ Where the hell are you rushing to ? ”

“ They’re attacking ! ” called Frau Zermack from above.

“ I see that ! ” grumbled Frau Naumann ; she threw the newspaper down by the door, put her hands on her hips and called up : “ Is that so ? Who is attacking ? ”

“ We are. The Dortmund people are coming, Frau Naumann. They’ve taken the guns away from the police all over the place and things’ll move here too ! ”

The little woman ran out on to the stairs. Other women too opened their doors. “ What’s up ? ” “ Well ? ”

“ What does that ‘ well ’ mean ? ” Frau Naumann was angry. “ If they would only show a little spirit for once and smash things. What have we got up till now ? Had to go hunting for grub every day ! ”

“ Do you think things’ll be any better if the workers do rise ? ” asked a woman whose husband was a Social Democrat. “ The workers can smash things up, to be sure, but shall we get anything to eat ? ”

“ Most certainly we shall.”

“ Listen to her jaw. She always has something to say, the bitch.”

“ God save us, things’ll be all topsy-turvy ! ” moaned Frau Kolbe. She had been told that the Russian Communists had burnt the churches, stabbed the sacred images with their bayonets and trodden them underfoot.

“ Will they nationalize the women here too ? ”

"My God, the stupid slut!" shouted Frau Naumann. "Of course they will. That's the first thing they'll do! Oh, what an idiot!"

"Wait a moment." A thin woman calmed them as she gathered up her sagging skirt. "They're not here yet."

"They'll come all right," shouted Frau Zermack as she ran upstairs. Frau Naumann, in spite of her weight, ran down as fast as Raup. She was like a living newspaper. In less than an hour everyone she met knew the news.

"They have risen to-day at Dortmund!"

"Have you heard?" she asked Frau Kreusat, who was going to the shed with a saucepan to feed the goats. "The men have risen at Dortmund!"

"They've got my Franz into trouble, the damn scoundrels!" she replied venomously and left Frau Naumann standing speechless.

"Did ever you see such a silly idiot! That old thing will never have much brains!" Ten minutes later the tireless woman stood again before the washtub with her sleeves rolled up, washing away for dear life.

CHAPTER XIV

B Ramm was obeying the instructions of his party and trade union and returning to the pit. He had his flask of coffee hanging over his shoulder and his blue and white handkerchief, knotted in front, tied round his powerful neck.

Paul Rentel, still smarting from the unfortunate occurrences of the night before, had noticed from his high window that workers with their gear were going to the mine. "No, that won't do!" he said to himself. He knew what steps to take and alarmed half a dozen of his friends. "Hurry up to the pit. Some scabs are wanting to go down." Then, concealing a pick-handle under his overcoat, he ran towards the mine. When he was some way off he saw that the first men were already at the gate-house. He sprinted and arrived out of breath at the entrance. "Heh, you idiots, what do you think you are going to do in there?" he yelled to the disconcerted men. "What devil's work are you up to? Back, I tell you, or you'll get something you don't like." In this way he managed to put a brake on the first crowd going down.

The miners tried to explain to him that the strike had been called off. "What do you mean, man? The Independents have agreed to call it off."

"None of that. Let the bosses, who have the wind up, get the coal out!"

"We won't let a shovelful of coal out yet."

Then friendly comrades came to his aid and he succeeded in forcing the wavers out to the gate, where fresh groups were gathering. These were partly composed of men who did not trouble their heads about politics. The workers

called them "scrapers." Some trade union officials also appeared. These would have liked to have eaten the undaunted Rentel alive.

"What does the Polack want? Chuck him out, boys. Let him have it!"

"Try it on!" said Rentel, and stood with his broad limbs astride the narrow gateway and his huge hands on his pick-handle. "Just come on and try!"

"Get away from that gate, you idiot!"

"Shut your jaw. There is another strike on."

Those furthest behind began to heave forward. "Shove him out of the way; one, two, three!"

"Get back, Christian, you damned scrapper, otherwise you'll feel my pick-handle!" Rentel threatened a hewer who had tried to push past him and hurled him back among the others. The fellow he pushed back began to abuse him: "You won't give us anything to eat, you imbecile!"

"Up till to-day you've gone hungry, so you can go on tightening your belts for a day or two, boys." The miners did not go through. They all looked round for another way of getting in and quailed before the stalwart Rentel. The six noisy, hefty young fellows who formed the picket stood like buffers before the gate and gave them no encouragement to go in.

"It's Rentel, the damned cur! He is going to start a revolution on his own. What will it be like when chaps like him have their say?"

Rentel grinned at their abuse. He bit off a quid of tobacco and chewed it at his ease. Then he spat a mouthful of juice to one side and said: "Just go home, comrades. I don't think you'd like it much if any trucks of coal go down after you. It is too dangerous, comrades!"

The miners looked perplexed. Those waiting began to reflect: "The cur has everything ready here and will push the trucks in; that is just what you can expect from Rentel."

"God damn you, Rentel, you brute, they should hang you! When we're starving, then you'll be mayor!"

" Go home, and in the meanwhile not one shovelful of coal will come up. They arrested Mahler and Kreusat last night. Till they're set free not one shovelful of coal shall leave the pit."

An inspector came out of the managerial offices. " Why are you not letting the men go down ? " The official was furious. Rentel chewed his tobacco and looked at the inspector under raised eyebrows. His massive hands played with the pick-handle. " Go away. Shut your jaw. Dig your own coal ! There is a strike on again ! "

The inspector muttered something between his teeth and disappeared into the gate-house.

The workers grew tired of waiting and went off home. August Bramm also joined a troop of them. In front of Tenement 35 they stood and talked, for on the way they had heard about the advance of the Dortmund men and the disarming of the police. " Look here, boys," said Bramm weakly, " a strike without the support of the trade unions is crazy and senseless. If you do that it'll work against what we want. To start a ' putsch ' policy now, with Kapp and Lüttwitz lying in wait, will only hinder our Government from restoring law and order again." He tugged despairingly at his moustache. His wavering found now very little response among the workers. The news from Dortmund was occupying the minds of nearly all of them, and many, who an hour before had been ready to go down the mine, now flamed into hatred through the outrages of the authorities. This hatred spread like wildfire.

" Quite right, it's about time we restored law and order. But we should do it without the superintendence of the police and the declaration of martial law. The Government doesn't seem to realize what life is in the pit."

August Bramm shook his head, deep in thought. He did not feel at all clear. Obviously he was not in agreement with the attacks of the greencoats on the workers in the city, but he did not blame those in authority, but believed that they were the result of an excess of zeal on the part

of some subordinate firebrand. An old worker came up to him and broke in on his meditations. "Come now, August. I don't altogether agree with everything them Spartacists do, but what those greencoats are doing is past all bearing. Do ye understand? Let's send them to the devil, and then we'll go down the mine again."

Bramm looked at him in distress. "If it were only an organized struggle, but conducted as it is it's all topsy-turvy."

The workers dispersed. Then Fritz Raup came up. He was glowing with excitement. "Well, August, what are you making a face like that for? Let the fakirs be! You're a proletarian. All you have to worry about is to get hold of a gun. The Dortmund men will be here soon."

"Fritz, why is there this discontent? It's terrible. Why are men acting like beasts? Have we not fought and spilt blood enough during the war? Why do you fight again to-day? It will cost the lives of workers again."

Fritz Raup remained standing there. "Do you think that makes for peace, that the lives of our children are under the bayonets of the mercenaries of the boss-class?"

Bramm shook his head despondently. "The Government was too tolerant."

"The Government was tolerant with the anti-working class reptiles and nurtured them till they grew strong. It was only with the Kappists that they were tolerant, August. They were much less tolerant with us," said Raup. "Last year, when we struck for the six-hour shift, they sent the Reichswehr against us. They restored order with hand grenades here in the Ruhr district, everywhere among the workers because they were demanding their rights. No, August, they were not tolerant then! And why didn't they deal with the Kappists like that? Not a shot fired, not an attempt to draw their teeth! No, they came to us and asked us to call a general strike! We've struck, and what are they doing now? They are letting 'order' be restored through the greencoats, who are hand and glove with

Kapp and Lüttwitz. You ought to have been with us in the city yesterday, then you'd have seen how they batoned us, fired on us, and how we had to lie down to avoid being killed. That's what they call law and order!"

They parted. August Bramm's thoughts as before were rebellious. It was hard for him to face realities. He was a man who hated shedding blood. But Raup was right. "If you talk Socialism you can't shoot down workers——"

In the course of the afternoon Trauten came to see him. He was very excited.

"What do you think, August?" said Trauten. "Isn't it appalling what these imbeciles are doing? The unions have called for a return to work and those idiots have planted themselves before the gate saying arrogantly: 'You'll not work!'"

August Bramm was not yet sure of his ground. The words of the comrades with whom he had been speaking still rang in his ears. "We forget that we are not alone," he said. "There are also others and they are not in agreement with what the trade unions and our party have ordered."

Trauten got heated: "They will only make a mess of it without the organizations."

"You listen to the men. I was with them early to-day at the pit. Only about ninety men followed us to start work again, ninety men out of nearly three thousand! It makes one think a bit."

Trauten got yet more annoyed. "They'll all go back to-morrow."

"The masses of the workers are not with us."

"They are," replied Trauten in a tone of conviction. "The men came out at the call of the trade unions to make the general strike. They will also follow the unions if they call on them to give up the struggle."

Bramm shook his head. "You are deceiving yourself, Jacob. They are not behind us. I was there and heard a lot of them. The miners are embittered against the

greencoats and they would rather starve than obey the instructions of the trade unions and go back to work under the old conditions. The news of the advance of the Dortmund men has acted like a tonic on them. Wherever you go you hear nothing but expressions of hatred and revolt, and quite rightly too."

He emphasized his last words so strongly that Trauten was astonished. A sneering smile spread over his face as he replied : " And you seem to be no less excited about it ! "

" Our Government should withdraw the greencoats from the Ruhr district, otherwise it'll get trouble."

" H'm, and the Spartacists are to be entrusted with the restoration of law and order, I see ! " And the sneering smile on Trauten's face deepened till it became hateful and repulsive.

" Let us talk intelligently, Jacob. I must remind you that we also once spoke of arming the organized workers, wasn't that so ? "

Trauten burst into a spiteful laugh. " Yes, once. But how did you take that ? Did you really think it possible ? At any rate the Government is much more prudent. Arms in the hands of the workers are dangerous."

Bramm looked at him indignantly. " The Government had much more support among the workers than among the greencoats or among the Reichswehr, which is politically quite opposed to it."

" Man, you're talking more like an extremist than that damned Raup ! It's a proof that you have not understood our policy."

" I'm thinking at the present moment very seriously about it, Comrade Trauten. I tell you there will soon be bloody collisions for which the workers will not be to blame. Even a beast of burden bites and fights when it can no longer stand the lash ! "

Trauten continued smiling. Bramm was sensible of something insulting in that smile. He compared it mentally

with Raup's cheerful, lively expression and his zeal and words of hope. Bramm made his decision.

Trauten still stood waiting. He waited in vain ! " Well, do you consider that policy ? " he asked at last scornfully. " Yes ! A worker's policy ! " Bramm completed his speech with emphasis. " A Moscow policy, you mean ! " replied Trauten contemptuously as he reached for the door-latch.

Bramm shrugged his shoulders like one who had got rid of a heavy burden. He went to the wardrobe and began to rummage in it. With all that was best in him he hated killing, but he also hated treachery. Trauten with his disagreeable smile had revealed the policy of his party to him. He drew from a bundle of clothes a rusty carbine which he had kept as a souvenir after the revolution. Then he went to the table and took some grease from a jar. Carefully Bramm began to clean his carbine, first the outer part of it, then the inside as well.

His wife, a small woman with a sallow complexion, came in from the village. She remained standing in astonishment in the middle of the kitchen. " What are you doing there ? " she asked. " What do you want with that gun ? "

" The Dortmund men are coming. They have risen and will be here in a short time."

" What has that got to do with you ? " Her eyes grew larger and her thin lips, between which showed two decayed stumps of teeth, began to tremble. " You don't want to have anything to do with those lunatics ! "

" I'm going with them." Bramm went on polishing the gun. Then she sprang upon him savagely with flashing eyes. Her small hands gripped the carbine. With a jerk she wrenches it from him.

" You're not going. I won't have it ! " she screamed.

Then Bramm got angry. He leapt with one bound to her side, " Give that gun here ! "

" Not if you strike me dead ! " she said defiantly.

There was a tough struggle between them for the gun,

and this for the first time after many a long year. She was a loyal functionary of her party and defended it with all the strength she could muster. He struggled for the possession of the gun which he needed to take part in the fighting. "Give it here!" "No!" "I'll twist your arm!" "No, not if you choke me!"

They staggered, fell down, got themselves hot and furious over the weapon. She protected herself with her nails and teeth. He very nearly put her thin wrists out of joint. She screamed, he cursed. At last he wrested the weapon from her.

She stood panting in front of him, stretched out her withered, clawlike hands against him. "Go, you cur, but don't come back to me again. You can peg out for all I care. Go to your new friends, but it's all over between us!"

He washed the blood from his scratches and laughed panting, now in quite a good humour. "You damned carrion; awful claws you've got!"

"You ought to go to work. The kids are going about half naked and we've nothing to eat."

"Your comrades in the Government don't care about that. They've got their bellies full. They take good care not to freeze either. But we are only the slaves!" he returned, and went on getting his gun ready.

She was unable to calm herself and went on weeping and abusing him. She simply could not understand how her husband could have changed so. She believed it was but a passing mood and tried to reassure herself with this thought. But then again when they argued with one another she noted that this time he was not the patient, weak man he had been before. The downtrodden proletarian in him was awakened. "So you are running knowingly into danger?" she concluded wearily.

"It is the only right way," he replied firmly. "I am only going the way which our party also once considered the right one."

CHAPTER XV

THE clock on the wall of the guard-room struck seven. The prisoners were stiff and dead tired from standing and looking at the wall. It had been a terrible night, listening for sounds from the city, waiting for a shot on which their lives depended. If this torture had been prolonged much more they would have gone mad. They got no more blows. There was no further need to beat them up. This waiting was more horrible than any beating. It was a question of life and death.

Franz Kreusat felt the spittle grow thick in his mouth. Several times he thought he would choke. And his tongue! If he moved it, the maddening pain returned. "Oh, for a drop of water!" This longing had been torturing him for hours.

The other prisoners were also plagued with thirst. Franz heard Karl Powodny muttering. "I'm choking," he whispered huskily.

Once Karl Powodny had asked one of the greencoats for water. "Oh, no!" was the answer, "you'll only get water if you'll tell what was planned for last night." Powodny refused the water. "I'll peg out before that," he said. "There'll be no more comrades in your claws!"

Mahler coughed dryly. He gazed perplexedly at the others. "This is lasting a lifetime. I'll fall down soon, damn it."

They dared only whisper. The greencoats were watching them in spite of their sleepiness. The sailor swayed like a pendulum to and fro, half asleep. The dark man had difficulty in keeping on his feet. The sixth man, a young fellow, was groaning.

He was a small, pale butty from the Zollverein Pit. The atmosphere of the mine had already drawn all the youthful colour from his face. At the moment his pallor was almost greenish. In his weary, hopeless eyes, which from time to time were turned to the dark man in search of aid, there burned a feverish light.

One of the greencoats yawned loudly and pulled open the shutters. A grey, misty light crept into the smoke-filled room. The cold air cooled their burning faces and soothed their wounds. The morning roused them from their torpor.

"It is day," whispered Karl Powodny, "and what comes now?"

"Yes, what?" was the thought of each one of them as they waited.

"Now, wake up." Franz got a push from behind. He shivered all over. Then his head began to burn. "It's the beginning!"

"Right turn!" They turned round stiffly. They blinked, their eyes being unable to stand the sudden glare of light. The sleepy greencoats on the bench stretched themselves. They yawned and looked at the prisoners with hostility.

"It's because of you swine that we've got to hang around here. You wait!" said one of them.

They brought in fresh water. They drank of it. The water dripped from the corners of their mouths on to the dirty floor. Franz longed to swallow even the drops which had fallen there.

"Could I have a drop?" he stuttered. His tongue stuck. He wanted to yell with pain, it hurt him so.

"You'll get something in the jaw," said the greencat who had been the last to drink.

"No, give him some," said another who did not appear to be so cruel. Franz looked at hin. He had a delicate, almost girlish face. In this one's eyes there lurked a gleam of compassion. He reached after the jug.

"No," growled the first. "They have got to tell us what they had planned for last night." He snatched the jug

from him and put it away again. The young policeman shrugged his shoulders and made a gesture surreptitiously to the prisoners as if to say : " I can't help it." He then went out of the room.

The guard-room sergeant looked at the dark man. He was a shade paler but as calm as ever. " Have you still not thought things over ? " asked the greencoat.

" I have nothing to think over," replied the dark man.

" You would be released if you did."

A sarcastic smile hovered on the lips of the dark man. " People catch mice with cheese ! "

" No use," grumbled another greencoat. " If they won't open their mouths they must be made to."

" Then hurry up in case others steal a march on you ! " The dark man was unflinching. Even in this terrible position he had the courage to mock at them.

Franz felt a thrill run down his spine. As he gazed at this comrade strength and endurance seemed to flow into him from the other.

And he was not the only one. The others also felt the stronger for it. They stood there with clenched teeth. Let them do their damnedest ! Franz Kreusat ruminated on the thought that he must die. Very seriously he pictured death to himself. He even wished that it would come soon. Had he not often wished for it at the front, in some crazily-led offensive when he lay despairing, surrounded by soldiers torn to pieces, dead, groaning and dying ? And when the trench gong sounded the gas alarm and he was crawling among the corpses because his mask was not gas-proof, trying to find a good one ? And when nausea from the stench of the entrails of corpses over-powered him ? Yes, then death often seemed to him a release. Death could not be more terrible than the endless horror of the trenches. Then, in spite of his youth, Franz had thought very seriously of death ; it was the same now. Obviously just a few words, a couple of names, and he could get water and perhaps be set free. " A few words, just a

couple of names ! ” Franz Kreusat felt himself reddening. *That* was not esprit de corps. Better die a horrible death than live despised, a traitor.

He listened to the sounds outside the window. The hob-nailed boots of the police stationed round the Town Hall rang on the pavement. There were voices giving sharp orders followed by a “ Yes, sir,” or the clicking together of heels. Otherwise nothing. No cheerful din of men’s voices, no care-free greetings or ringing girlish laughter. Martial law ! Silence, expectancy, terrible uncanny expectancy ! Greencoats came in, whispered to one another. Their faces were no longer so confident. They seemed to be worried. Franz caught snatches of their conversation : “ The Dortmund men . . . ” “ Also from Bochum . . . ” “ The police disarmed. . . . ”

“ Tripe ! ” said a greencat and gave a forced laugh.

“ No,”—the man who had brought the news defended himself—“ it’s true.”

The dark man turned to the sailor. “ Did you hear that ? ” The sailor nodded. Karl Powodny had not grasped the meaning of of it. He whispered to Franz : “ What is it ? ”

“ Silence, no talking there,” said the guard-room sergeant in a threatening voice. Anxiety made his voice uncertain. There was something in the news which was making them nervous.

Then in came another greencat. “ Come on ! ” he ordered, beckoning to Franz Kreusat. Franz looked in astonishment at his comrades and went out before the greencat. He went down a half-darkened corridor and to the right into another room.

“ Here is the prisoner, Herr Lieutenant ! ” announced the policeman as he pushed Franz forward and then stood at attention at the door. It was the officer with the boyish face. He looked sarcastic and not in very good spirits.

“ What had you planned for last night ? ”

“ Nothing.”

“ Don’t try to deceive me, my boy.” His sarcastic face

twitched nervously as his small hands toyed with a ruler.
"Tell the truth."

The youngster's contemptuous tone enraged Franz. He had to answer a fellow he could have knocked out with one blow in the ribs! The officer stood up and glanced out of the window. Outside a motor cycle rattled up. Snatches of hasty talk followed by cursing could be heard. He strained his ears to catch what was being said. Franz also listened tensely.

An orderly rushed into the room. "Herr Lieutenant . . ." With a wave of his hand the officer cut him short. "Not here!"

They went out into the corridor. Franz heard excited conversation. The greencoat at the door noted that Franz was listening and yelled at him: "All right, you swine! I'll teach you to listen!"

Then the lieutenant came in again. He was pale and seemed to have shrank still smaller. Anxiety made his thin lips quiver. He motioned to the waiting greencoat. "Take him away. The prisoners are to be removed from here."

The greencoat looked at him in astonishment. "Go on, don't go to sleep," screamed the lieutenant. "Off you go!"

A shove, and Franz was in the corridor again. In a few minutes he was with the others. Here also an increasing anxiety had seized the greencoats. They got themselves into marching order and swore.

"Don't you laugh too soon," growled the guard-room sergeant to the prisoners. "We're not so far gone yet. You're only the more certain to get a volley. If they let you off I'll eat my hat!"

The dark man's face was joyful. He had drawn the right conclusions from the confused conversation he had heard. The workers were marching on Essen, disarming the police. The other comrades read this in his face and were glad too in spite of the threats of the greencoats.

"Even if they do shoot us," thought Franz, "they'll get their punishment. The workers will avenge us."

"Off you go, you bastards!" A group of police appeared and pushed them out. As when they had been brought in, greencoats were everywhere. "Go on, get a move on!" More blows. A shower of blows rained down on their already injured limbs.

In the rush forward Franz noticed the greencoat with the pretty girlish face. He raised his arm but did not strike. "Run fast!" he whispered to Franz. His uplifted arm hindered the next man from striking. He appeared to cover Franz as he staggered on. Then they got outside.

Just behind Franz the sailor bellowed like a wounded beast. A rifle butt had hit him and knocked him down the stairs.

"Now then, up you get!" The sailor was dragged to his feet. "Hands up. Forward march!"

A lorry pulled up. "In you get!" The prisoners were crowded into it. The greencoats, armed to the teeth, followed. A wave to the driver and the lorry moved off.

Opposite Franz Kreusat the greencoat with the girlish face was sitting. He took little part in the conversation of his colleagues. Often his eyes sought Kreusat's, striving to clarify his confused thoughts. In his expression there lay an apology: "I scorn such actions. I have nothing to do with them." He actually availed himself of a moment when the police craned forward as they neared a crowd of men and he was unobserved, to say, "If I had known this was coming I wouldn't have gone into the police force."

"Down on your knees!" ordered their leader. The prisoners had to duck down. These streets through which they were passing were thronged with frightened bourgeois who stood in groups round the police pickets. Heavily-laden lorries rushed towards the centre of the city. Machine guns were mounted on their drivers' cabs. There were armed sections as though under mobilization orders. There was no talking, only a terrified silence, a mistrustful scanning of the faces of pedestrians as they hurried past, especially

those who had their hands in their pockets. Very often there was a cry of "Off the streets!" or "Hands up!"

Up into Ruttenscheid, along the Klarastrasse they had to climb. There the leader of the section gave a sign to turn to the right. The fresh March air invigorated them. It was like a healing bath after hours of hard filthy work. New strength surged through their limbs, stiff though they were; deep down, like a gleaming spark, fresh hope flickered in their hearts. The streets were broad and planted with trees and had tall, pleasant villas on each side, with shiny brass plates on the doors. The roofs had cupolas and towers. In the distance at the end of the street stood the gigantic buildings of the Law Courts, built of hewn stone, solemn, harsh and powerful. The March sun was mirrored on the copper of their roofs.

A little to the side stood a plain slate-covered building with many barred windows, separated from the outer world by a high wall and iron gates. It was the gaol for prisoners on remand.

"The Haumannshof!" said Karl Powodny, nudging Franz.

"You are going before the court martial," said the young policeman in a low voice, thus, all unwittingly, crushing the tiny spark of hope in the prisoners.

"Courage, comrades!" said the dark man as they passed through the creaking gate into the cold, sunless prison yard. Then Franz heard a moaning which sounded like a monotonous prayer, and the heavy door of a cell closed behind him.

CHAPTER XVI

STOPPENBERG was in a tremendous state of ferment. Groups of men formed in the streets, with joy, fear and uncertainty written on their faces.

The news reached them very incoherently. No one had heard anything for certain, but all knew that the workers were in revolt.

There was the strictest police surveillance in Essen. Even women were searched ; there was danger of being arrested or beaten up. Everywhere were machine guns, cordons, greencoats and special constables. The Cattlemarket had been transformed into a fortress.

The greencoats had made all preparations for a strenuous defensive. If they lost the Cattlemarket, they would lose the whole city also. The heads of the police knew this and so did the workers. So all talk turned on the theme of the capture of the Cattlemarket. And excitement was growing fast.

People who came from the city told how workers were being again arrested. And woe betide inquisitive people who collected together anywhere ! They were fired on at once. Prisoners were taken to the accompaniment of blows to the Town Hall, the Haumannshof and the police barracks at Segeroth.

The workers at Segeroth had to look on angry and helpless while the comrades who were brought in were flogged. Indignation reached boiling point. Armed troops of workers waited impatiently for the order to attack, but they were to wait till reinforcements arrived from Dortmund, Bochum and Gelsenkirchen.

It was no easy task, this waiting. Waiting, in spite of

hatred, excitement and the screams of their fellows being maltreated by the greencoats. Couriers, covered with dust and utterly exhausted from rushing backwards and forwards along the rough roads, rode to and from the city. They brought news : "Advances everywhere." "The workers are besieging the aerodrome, where strong forces of greencoats are stationed."

At the aerodrome at Rotthausen was an ammunition depot which the greencoats were strongly guarding. The workers, who in Gelsenkirchen had disarmed the police and special constables without firing a shot, attacked the aerodrome in the course of the afternoon.

Raup met Zermack near the Bauer Horn.

"Hullo, Jupp, where are you off to ? "

"We must send them help from here. There are guns in the aerodrome." Zermack stood still.

Several workers gathered round the two men to hear what news they had. A cyclist rode up. "Take care !" he yelled. "The greencoats are coming. We have the aerodrome !" And he was off again.

Raup was terribly excited. "The aerodrome is ours !" He wanted to rush off there at once, and forgot all caution.

"Stay where you are. Didn't you hear ? The greencoats are coming," said Zermack, holding him back.

"Here they are !" screamed a woman from a window, and pointed with outstretched arm in the direction of the church, where round the corner of the street a lorry full of police was slowly moving forward.

The workers rushed into the houses and the greencoats who were standing in the lorry got ready to shoot and yelled : "Off the streets ! Shut your windows !" On one of the lorries were several with blood-stained bandages.

"Now they are feeling what it's like to be hurt," muttered Fritz Raup, and struggled against a momentary weakness. Bloodshed can make a man mad but it can also make him compassionate. It made Raup feel sorry for them, but this

compassion was only transitory. Swift as the flicker of an eyelid his wave of emotion subsided.

"We should have barricaded the street against them," said Zermack when the lorries had passed.

"Yes, that would have been a good thing," agreed a miner. "We should have stuck a couple of beams right across the street."

Their faces cleared and lost their terrified expression and conversation was resumed. "What are they doing now?"

"Trying to hold the Cattlemarket. What else do you think?"

"They won't hold it long."

"Don't you kid yourself. They won't give in so soon."

"Once we take the Cattlemarket it's all up with them!"

Raup suddenly noticed something strange. "Have any of you seen a bluecoat to-day?" he asked.

All now recollect ed the strange fact that they had not seen the usual street patrols. "They're afraid." "Or they've had orders not to go out." "That's very likely!" "They've got cold feet because of the arrests." The blue-coats had as a matter of fact got their orders. They were charged by the Commissioner of Police to disperse by force all crowds and gatherings. Besides this, they were ordered to offer a vigorous resistance to the advance of the workers' forces. But the bluecoats did not obey the orders. They sat in the police stations in a state of depression, and did not risk going into the streets. They quarrelled among themselves. Those on day duty cursed those on night duty because they were fools enough to make the arrests. They also cursed the greencoats and put all the blame on them. Theirs was no pleasant position. They knew that the workers were embittered against them.

The originator of the arrests, the plain-clothes man, Müller, had disappeared. He preferred to remain invisible. The workers were so furious that they would have stoned him.

The workers' conversation now turned on the bluecoats.

They all had something to say about them, some good or bad deed to recall.

A Christian iron-worker, who had a relative in the force, defended them. "These fellows are not the worst by a long chalk. They ought to be left alone. But the greencoats are a bit too much of a good thing, I tell you."

"What do you think?" said Fritz Raup, who had up till now been arguing with a waverer. "Isn't this the time to go to the police stations and take the bluecoats' guns from them?"

"That's not a bad idea, but you can't do it with your bare fists," said one wary fellow.

"We will take guns with us." said Raup.

"Then come along, but not through the streets."

At that moment a boy came running from the direction of the city, crying: "The greencoats are coming. Get off the streets!"

"Again, already!" The men stared in astonishment. Then they heard the hooters. "Get inside quick." Everyone rushed as before into the doors and entrances. Then the first lorry rushed past. The faces of the greencoats in it were pale and contorted with fear.

"Shut your windows! Off the streets!" they shouted.

"Yah, you damned bloodhounds, you lousy swine!" shrieked a woman from a window. She shook her fist at the militia, who pointed their guns at her, yelling: "Shut that window!"

"Do you want to spill more workers' blood, you murderers?" screeched the woman.

Bang! A shot. The bullet hit the wall and knocked a piece of brick off. It was very near the window.

"Ha ha!" laughed the woman shrilly. "Done that time; made a mess of it that time!" Her voice was full of hatred.

The lorry stopped for a minute. The greencoats consulted together, then their leader waved his hand and they drove on.

Then came the second car. Now other women began to

abuse them. "What do you want here? Go to hell; we don't want you! You want to maim our men! Go back where you came from, you brutes!"

"Do you hear the women?" called Raup to Zermack. "Lord, when they begin things, do hum!"

The second lorry also rushed in the same direction, beyond the church which stretched its pinnacles high above the tenements. In the crowded entrance halls women and children who had run in from the streets were whimpering. They were afraid the greencoats would be able to shoot at them from outside.

"We'll make a barricade," growled Jupp Zermack. "We've talked long enough, boys. Let's get on with the job."

"Wait a minute, Jupp." Another held him back. "Don't go across the street, you're running right into their jaws. Go round the back if you like."

Zermack stood at the entrance to the yard. The door stood open.

"Go on across the yard then," said Zermack. "Keep your guns, those of you that have them. It'll be all right."

In the yard he met Raup. "Here, Fritz, go into the Feldstrasse. Build a barricade there."

"And what are you going to do?" asked Raup.

"I'll go down into the village and see what's up. Cheerio!"

One after another they crept through the yard into the street, advancing from house to house. Shots rang out behind and in front of them and bullets whistled over their heads, striking the walls and the roofs of the houses, and there was a clatter of falling slates.

Raup seized his gun. He ran with long strides over the square to Nölle's Factory. Before and behind him were more workers with guns under their coats. "Ping, ping, ping!" Shots rang out after them, coming from the sports ground where a third lorry full of militia had stopped.

"Click, click, click!" The shots buried themselves in the wall encircling the factory.

When they got in behind the factory outbuildings one of the workers plucked Fritz by the sleeve. "Hullo, Fritz!"

Raup turned round in astonishment. "August! what do you want?"

"Don't you see?"

"What about your party?"

"I'm doing without it for the time being," said Bramm, smiling. They went on together. Raup asked no more questions, he was content. "So be it," he thought to himself. "Workers stick together when there's a fight on."

They advanced rapidly, for the firing increased. Machine guns rattled somewhere. They must have been just round the church.

They met a party of workers. "Where are you going?" asked Raup. "To get arms. There should be lots lying about the aerodrome," they shouted cheerfully and went off at a double.

A crowd of men were gathered in the Feldstrasse, but there were not many guns. Fritz Raup took the men who were armed and placed them in positions from which they could protect the Essen Road and cover the sports ground.

"Now for it, boys, but don't waste your ammunition till we've got more of it!"

"Hurry up, get out your bikes quick and go for guns and ammunition!" he shouted to those who were standing in the street staring. A number vanished into the houses and brought out bicycles. They rode off.

"Go by the Bachstrasse, you'll be safer that way," Fritz Raup called after them. Then he took cover behind the wall of a shed and looked over the Essen Road, where a lorry was standing. The greencoats were sheltering behind the lorry and hauling a machine gun down from it. Raup took aim and fired. His hands trembled so much that he did not risk choosing a target. "How's that?" he murmured half aloud. "That's the first shot!" replied August

Bramm, who had taken up his position, on his left, also behind the wall of the shed. Before them the greencoats had unloaded the machine gun. Ducking as they ran, they were dragging it to the sports ground. Raup took aim again. Crack! went a shot behind him. Bramm had fired too. Then Raup fired again. The greencoats threw themselves to the ground as shot after shot rang out over them.

CHAPTER XVII

THE greencoats had had orders to draw a cordon round Stoppenburg. The bluecoats ought to have reinforced them but they did not come out. Instead they stayed in the police stations, afraid of the workers' fists, cursing the Kappists, the Government, and the green-coats, and talked more like Socialists than they had the year before.

In Stoppenberg main street, just behind the Catholic Church, the crew of the first lorry came into collision with the advancing workers, who had also arrived in a requisitioned lorry. As soon as they had seen the greencoats, they had dismounted their machine gun, established themselves in the middle of the road and opened fire. Shots were fired from every roof in the vicinity. With great difficulty the greencoats succeeded in taking refuge behind the church fence and in the surrounding houses, from whence they kept up a regular fire.

The citizens slammed to their shutters, shut their house and shop doors and bolted them. In a few minutes the fronts of the houses were spattered with ugly spots, scars and gashes. Broken tiles clattered to the ground.

Up the Church Hill, on which the church had stood for nearly a thousand years, a detachment of greencoats had climbed in order to be better able to bring the workers in the main street under fire.

A few bold spirits among the workers decided to attack from the rear and drive them down from the hill with a volley of hand grenades. A machine gun, which the green-coats had brought up, drove them back. Stubbornly the police troops fought for possession of the Church Hill, for it

enabled them to check any advance of the workers. They attempted to get more reinforcements. They were expecting the crew of the second lorry, but these were in difficulties. There was firing at the Wallmannshof, and they had to take cover. Workers were firing from the Wallmannshof and the railway embankment, where Jupp Zermack had mobilized the miners from the suburb. From there they could also keep under fire part of the Essen Road and the sports ground. From the Grabenstrasse, where a few miners had mounted to the attics of the houses, rifle shots also rang out.

The greencoats defended themselves desperately. They occupied the cemetery south of the Church Hill. A section tried to force its way further down and reached the Schwandorf Schools. From there they pushed the workers back as far as the Town Hall, from where they fired across to the railway embankment. The rest occupied Surgeon Kondring's villa to the left of the Wallmannshof. The fiercest struggle of all raged in this spot.

Between the crews of the second and third lorries, which latter had only managed to penetrate as far as the Bauer Horn footpath, two young snipers lay in a good hiding-place. As soon as a single uniformed man came into view a well-aimed shot rang out. One of the lads was wearing a hussar's jacket; at a rakish angle on his bushy hair was perched a soldier's cap. This "hussar" fired calmly and accurately. His shots had already laid low some rash greencoats. The attempted advance of the reinforcements failed, though attempted many times, and later on some workers with a machine gun took up a position near the "hussar."

The police contingents were separated from one another, isolated so that they had to protect themselves on all sides to avoid being defeated by the workers, who were now led by men who knew the locality.

The greencoats on the Church Hill were also in difficulties. A detachment of workers had by now climbed up the

sheltered side of the hill and cleaned it up with hand grenades. Taken by surprise the greencoats were forced to retreat. They rushed in full flight down to the cemetery, from which they were driven by the machine guns, and retreated across the street into Surgeon Kondring's villa. By now the workers had occupied the cemetery and were firing at the villa, and in a short time every pane of glass in the windows was shattered. A storming party attacked the house, but the besieged hurled volleys of hand grenades at them. The police had brought the whole supply of munitions from the lorry into the house.

The workers in the Mittelstrasse pushed on up to the church. The greencoats were cornered in a house, and surrounded. They fired no longer, but crept into the cellars and up into the attics. The storm troops of the workers appeared in front of the house.

"Come out!" they shouted to those inside. There was no answer. The enraged workers forced an entry. A moment later the police came rushing out. "Mercy! Mercy! Kamerad!" they shrieked.

Blows rained on them; their faces were covered with blood. Those who were hit yelled and begged for mercy. "Now you're squealing! It's our turn now!" More blows rained down on them.

From a hole in the cellar a wounded man was screaming, his eyes rolling with the fear of death. "Let me alone!"

"Come out, you cur!" Madness seized the workers, who had already been fighting at Dortmund. "Out with you!" The greencat staggered to his feet. A rifle butt crashed down and the greencat fell to the ground shrieking.

Two of the local workers warded off further blows from him and took him away half dead, but further danger lay ahead. At Schiemann's Inn stood a couple of lads with stubbly chins, their hollow eyes gleaming feverishly. They were chewing dry bread.

"Where are you going with him?" asked one of them, and gripped his gun with both hands. With a terrible swing

he brought it down. One of the miners just dragged the prisoner back in time, and the gun was shattered into splinters on the pavement.

The two miners took the wounded man by the nearest route to the police station, which had been captured a few minutes previously. As they neared the station they met some bluecoats.

"Give up your guns." The bluecoats unfastened them readily. There were four of them. "What shall we do now?" asked one in a despondent voice.

"Clear out!" The bluecoats had expected something very different. They waited no longer, but vanished at once. Near the Town Hall lay a dead militiaman, his face in a pool of blood. The Town Hall garrison had fled. The walls were full of bullet holes and all the windows were broken. Round the Town Hall crept workers and fired over towards the schools, where a detachment of greencoats was lodged. Then they stormed it. Out came the prisoners with hands held high and terrified faces.

At the police station the number of the prisoners kept increasing. Crowded into a special room they stared before them with blank faces. They were told that they were going to be shot. At first they cried out in terror and despair, then, one after another, they sank into a state of stupor. Before the door on the ground floor stood a lank, fully-armed miner on sentry duty. His square face with its bristling moustaches beamed with pride. To everyone who came in he said excitedly, "The greencoats are in there. They've got so tame that they'll eat out of your hand!"

Schenke, the old metal-worker, and some other Independents who had been about the district, came to the police station. The first question they asked was about the bluecoats. "They've gone home," was the answer.

"Madness!" said Schenke. "You should have locked them up!"

"They weren't dangerous any more."

"But they arrested our men during the night!"

"So they did!" In their joy at taking the police station at so little cost the miners had forgotten the incident of the arrests. They discussed whether they would go and recapture the bluecoats in their homes. That would not be so easy, as firing was going on all over the district.

The battle went on even more fiercely. Charge after charge was made, especially against the garrison in the sports ground. The greencoats' machine guns were working at full speed, but so were those of the workers. Hand grenades went crashing down. House after house was attacked and defended.

Rentel had shot one of the greencoat leaders near Reckmann's Inn. When this man had exposed himself beyond the shelter of the house Rentel had been ready for him, taken aim and fired. The greencoat gripped his stomach with both hands and collapsed in a heap.

Rentel's eccentric friend Flapsig, who was also lying on the railway embankment, took the sports ground under his care. Behind some earthworks showed the caps of the greencoats who had taken up a position encircling a small garden. Full of hatred he aimed at the caps. He watched carefully and was slow taking aim so that his shot might be the surer. Some of the caps had already disappeared. The bullets whistled unpleasantly near their peaks.

One greencoat appeared to have gone mad. He drew himself up to his full height and fired across the ploughed field lying between him and his enemies. Over the field three workers were running trying to get to the embankment. The Reichswehr from the Essen Road also fired wildly after them. One of them fell and did not rise again. The greencoat on the sports ground continued firing, still standing up, at the two workers who were now crawling across the field.

"Blast it!" growled Flapsig, who had fired too soon in his rage, as he took aim again. He controlled himself with a powerful effort so as to shoot calmly. Then he pulled the

trigger. The greencoat dropped his rifle, remained for an instant standing stiff as a post, and then fell full length. He rolled down a slight slope and did not stir. The bullet had passed between his eyes.

The other greencoats became uneasy and their firing slackened. Also the rifle fire from the Feldstrasse doubled in intensity. The Katernberg workers, miners from the Zollverein pits and iron-workers from the Katernberg foundries, had come as reinforcements. There were even uniformed tramway employees.

The sun sank in the west behind the towering slag heaps round the mines. The air became raw and frosty.

Fritz Raup and August Bramm still stood side by side and looked out and fired over the Essen Road. They talked as they stood there. "She was like a fury!" Bramm was relating the incident with his wife. "It astonished her as much as it did me. It isn't easy to change one's opinions as one does one's shirt, Fritz. I wonder if we are doing the right thing?"

Fritz took some trouble to argue him out of his doubts. "What else was there to do, August? What else but take arms if they will keep us under a rotten administration by force? Nothing can be done by handshaking and discussions. They'll promise you the blue sky from Heaven, and then sock you one in the jaw if you demand what they've promised you."

Bramm thought it over carefully as he fired. "Those over there are fools too," he said in a depressed voice. "The capitalist is not such a fool as to go to the front himself. He hires other men to protect him."

Raup grew stern. "Why do they fight for him, why?"

Bramm was silent. Raup was right. These questions had often puzzled him; they had puzzled him years before, when he lay in the trenches. "Why did the soldiers, millions of them, obey orders? And then in the opposite trenches lay other soldiers, but not one of those who had hired them

to defend them ! Why ? " They pondered over this silently as they fired.

Jupp Zermack at the same time had run over to the village. He wanted to learn details of the next steps to be taken to carry on the fighting, so he went to the police station. There he asked about the bluecoats. Schenke told him how they had let them go. Zermack was very angry. " We ought to have learnt from them first what has happened to our comrades," he said, and ordered them to fetch the bluecoats back.

" It would be hard to do that now, Jupp," replied Schenke. " When we are fixed up here we'll fetch them."

A delegation of workers from the other towns entered the guard-room. They demanded food. " We've had to manage with dry bread all day," they complained. " Are you afraid to requisition anything in case they take you for thieves ? "

" Come along with me," said Zermack, and took them round to the Town Hall. The Mayor was not there so Zermack went round to his official residence. He pressed the bell-button with his rifle. The old man appeared with a timid smile : " What can I do for you ? "

" We require food for our men," said Zermack.

" Are our men here already ? " asked the Mayor and gave a more friendly little laugh. Jupp Zermack looked at the old man in bewilderment. He thought that he was making fun of him.

" What men do you mean ? "

" Why, the workers."

" Ho-ho-ho ! " Zermack burst out laughing. The other workers laughed also, while the Mayor shifted from one foot to the other in embarrassment. " Our men are your men now, are they ? For once ! " laughed Zermack and nodded to the Mayor, who looked confused.

" They are citizens of my town as any other citizens are," he stuttered in defence of himself.

" Well, that's good. Now give these citizens an order for

provisions so that they needn't starve. They have been two days and nights on their way here, and that means something."

The old man held out his hands deprecatingly. "But only for our own men, Herr Zermack, only for those in my mayoralty."

"For all," replied Zermack curtly, and added to the persuasiveness of his words by producing an army pistol.

"I am undertaking a very heavy responsibility." He looked uneasily at the pistol in Zermack's hands and at the unshaven faces and ragged clothing of the workers with him. It did not seem a very cheerful outlook for him.

"Wait a minute!" said the Mayor and went into his house. Zermack stood at the door with a broad grin on his face.

"There's an old fox for you!" he said, turning to his companions. "He's up to all sorts of tricks!"

Just then the old man came out again and handed him a written order. "You can obtain provisions with this order, the corporation assumes the responsibility for payment."

Zermack looked distrustfully at the script. "Have you given us an order for enough?" he asked.

"I don't know exactly how much you will need. Just tell the tradespeople that I myself have allotted you the quantities you require; they won't make any difficulty about that."

"Well, we only want enough for the men to eat." There were hundreds of them who needed filling. Couriers were sent out at once to see about a kitchen. One detachment went for groceries, potatoes, peas and beans and bacon, also bread and sausage. Women were brought in who at once set to work on the cooking.

CHAPTER XVIII

JUPP ZERMACK went back again to the railway embankment. He had had a conference with the leaders in the village. They wanted to attack that evening. Zermack was to arrange that the detachment of greencoats came under a sharp fire from the railway embankment. He had to go carefully as he walked back up the Ernestinenstrasse. The greencoats in Kondring's villa had the upper part of the street, where the railway crossing lay, under fire. A machine gun was firing from the roof. It was dark ; heavy clouds swept over the chimneys and pits. Zermack sniffed the air. "It smells like snow." He breathed in the cold March air, testing it. Before long he was with his comrades again.

"What is it like down there, Jupp ? "

"Going well, comrades."

"Will there be a dust-up ? Are we to attack ? "

"They're going to get it very soon !" Zermack showed his strong white teeth in a grin.

"And get it hot and strong !" laughed a young lad, swinging his rifle.

Zermack explained to them what he had learnt in the village and called them to their posts. They followed him obediently. They submitted themselves gladly to this strong, unwearying miner. Then the firing began. "Rat-tat-tat-tat," the machine guns of the greencoats replied at once. It was nearly six o'clock. An icy March wind blew over the ploughland and nipped through the workers' thin coats. They swore and beat their chests with their arms to get warm.

"Now it's blowing again," grumbled one between

chattering teeth. "If we were to lie down here and sleep till morning we'd get frozen solid!"

"It won't last, comrades," said Zermack encouragingly; his own teeth were chattering. A fine rain began and added to their misery. "That too, now!" grumbled someone beside him.

Now things had begun to move in the district. The "hussar" with a storming party had worked his way up to the Bauer Horn and from there to the upper part of the Essen Road, driving the greencoats from house to house. From Nölle's Factory also shock troops came to the spot. One of the greencoats suddenly turned in his flight, stood still and fired at the pursuing workers. The "hussar" dropped to the pavement. The other workers sprang over him as they advanced and fell upon the fleeing militia. The rest of the detachment which occupied the sports ground left their cover and ran down the street. The greencoats were cut off from their comrades. "Crack, Wum!" Bombs flew after them.

The greencoats threw away their guns, cast behind them anything that might hinder their flight, fled up Essen Hill, the broad street leading to the Cattlemarket, and rushed along it pursued with shouts by the workers.

Around Kondring's villa also a stubborn battle was raging. The besieged were protecting themselves now with desperation. Dead and wounded lay round the villa. They bore them away and stormed it anew. The greencoats still refused to surrender.

"We shall have to blow up the whole show," decided the miners. They crept in yet greater numbers round the house and shot at it like madmen. The men from the railway embankment searched the ploughland. Rentel went in front, for he had noted where one of the three workers had fallen. They found him. He lay with his hands blue and clutching the sods and his mouth full of earth. He was a stranger who had come from a distance to take part in the fighting. His chest was torn by a bullet which

had entered his back. They raised him up in silence and carried him over to the railway embankment where other bodies were already lying. The miners laid him down beside the first comrades. Then they drew their overcoats round them and crouched in the hollows on the railway embankment and waited.

CHAPTER XIX

RAUP had advanced with his men from the Feldstrasse. They now lay around the railway station in the end houses on the Essen Road. In front, as far as the railway bridge which formed the boundary between Stoppenberg and Essen, a strong detachment of machine guns was posted. Shots rang out and machine guns rattled from the Cattlemarket. As it was very strongly manned and fortified they decided to wait in the neighbourhood for the final attack, till the promised reinforcements came up.

Fritz took the opportunity and went to look for Zermack. August Bramm went with him. As they passed in front of Tenement 35 Raup hesitated and looked up at the Kreusats' window.

"Let's go up and see Martin," he decided. They stamped up the dark stairs. Frau Kreusat received them with a look of hostility. She was crouched at the window, staring out of it. It was dangerous to sit by the window and Martin scolded her for it, but she would not allow herself to be dissuaded and remained sitting there in spite of the bullets, which often struck the walls very near the window. Martin sat muttering to himself on the hearth and stirred the embers with the poker.

"Good evening," said Raup and nodded to Frau Kreusat.

"Where is Franz?" She was irreconcilable.

Raup swallowed. "We don't know yet. Perhaps to-morrow . . ."

"To-morrow!" she sneered.

"Yes, to-morrow, then we shall be right in Essen."

The conversation was painful to Bramm. He saw at once that here was a doting mother who could think of nothing but her child. If they had brought her back her lad she would have kissed their hands. But she had masked with hatred her anguish for the boy who was missing.

"We could do nothing else, Frau Kreusat." Bramm tried now.

She threw a withering glance at him. "Nothing? You should have kept the peace."

"We're fed up with this peace which keeps us down to the level of animals," growled Jupp.

She looked at him without understanding. "You'd have done better to keep the peace. What have you gained by it? Only that men have been killed. Who knows what has happened to my boy!"

Martin signed to them from the hearth to be silent; and they themselves saw that words were useless. After a short chat with Martin they left the tenement.

When they got outside Raup breathed freely once more. "Heavens, that old woman upsets me as much as being under fire!"

"We've got to reckon with people like her," replied Bramm. "They're no use. It will be a long time before we get rid of them."

Raup asked a couple of miners for news of Zermack. "He must be at the railway bridge," they said.

Raup and Bramm went straight across the frozen furrows. "Halt! Who goes there?" challenged a sentry who was standing behind some brushwood. Raup gave his name. The worker came nearer distrustfully, his weapon ready to fire, and scanned them both. "You are looking for Zermack? He's over on the railway embankment."

Zermack had already heard their voices and came to meet them. "God damn it, it's Fritz!" The tall fellow trembled with emotion. "And you too, August? Well, that's more than we expected." Their hands met in a firm

grip. "Some show, eh ?" said Raup with a lump in his throat. "How goes it?" "To-morrow we march on Essen with flags flying!" The other miners greeted them with a shout. "Hullo, Fritz!" "Hullo, August, you here too?"

August Bramm listened to their greetings with their true ring of fellowship. A long repressed joy filled and cheered him, gripped him warmly and drove away the last traces of doubt. He laughed gaily with them.

"Who are those?" asked Raup and pointed with a wave of his arm to two motionless forms on the ground. "Those are two comrades who have been killed," said Rentel. He lifted the damp coats from the two bodies. "I have avenged this one," he said and pointed to the dead worker whom they had brought back from the field. "He is a stranger comrade from somewhere else. We don't know his name," added Zermack.

A cold shiver ran down Raup's back. The dead man was young, about the same age as Franz Kreusat. The embittered face of Frau Kreusat appeared before him. "Cover him up," he said hoarsely. Rentel looked at him with astonishment and covered the bodies again.

"You are thinking of Franz?" Zermack divined Raup's thoughts.

"Yes."

"We'll hope it hasn't happened to him."

"We'll hope so."

August Bramm stood quietly beside them. "There is no struggle without its victims," he said.

Below in the village the rest of the police forces were fighting tenaciously for their lives. Shot after shot flashed through the darkness. Between these sounds roared the explosion of hand grenades. The greencoats were still hoping for reinforcements. Down in the cellar, among the coal and rubbish, sat the surgeon's wife, distracted with fear and very uncomfortable. She waited eagerly for the fortune of battle to turn in favour of the besieged. Mean-

while her husband was in the hospital across the road tending friends and enemies alike. Dr. Kondring, a man of few words, was neither loved nor hated. The miners went to him with their ailments because he was thought to be a clever doctor.

In the main street was a small hall into which the dead were being brought. They laid them on straw on the floor. Among the dead was one wearing an hussar's jacket ; his pale, sallow face was youthful and framed in tangled, bushy, yellow hair ; his mouth was open as if screaming.

In the big hall at Hoffrogge's Public House lay those workers from the other towns who had stormed the aerodrome and cleaned up the centre of Stoppenberg. Some slept, tired out by their hardships; others talked noisily, their guns beside them, ready to pick them up at a moment's notice and resume the struggle.

In a smaller room the section commanders were discussing the attack on Essen. Messengers brought the news that strong detachments were approaching to reinforce them from Dortmund, Witten and Hagen. It was unanimously agreed to postpone the attack till the reinforcements arrived. This decision was communicated to all the leaders of the groups of combatants dispersed in the locality.

In the police station the inmates began to get sleepy. After hours of talk they were thoroughly tired out. In the course of the evening, Ganzer, the Majority Socialist, had come round and started spreading defeatist propaganda. The Independents had rounded on him sharply and sent him about his business. "To-day you are chasing the greencoats," said Ganzer. "And to-morrow they'll be chasing you to the devil. It's always the same story." "Why do you come hanging round here ?" they asked him. "We don't need an inspection. We left school long ago and it's time you knew it. Either you are for the workers or you are against them. A policy of compromise won't cut any ice here. Either shoulder a gun and come with us or else get out !"

Ganzer beat an angry retreat. At the door he turned once more and said, "In any case we reserve the right to protest against such measures."

"Wait till we've finished with the greencoats!" old Schenke called after him. Then one after another dozed off.

It was late at night. In the district itself it had become quiet except for a few shots round the villa. The old iron-worker rubbed the sleep from his eyes with an effort and walked a few steps to and fro in front of the police station. Weariness overcame him and, since there was apparently no danger, he leant against the wall and gazed sleepily over towards the Church Square.

Schenke had difficulty in seeing through the blackness. The whistling and rattling of the wind made him uneasy. He kept on hearing sounds like the tramping of many men and horses. Was he seeing right? Two shadows were creeping towards him from the Town Hall. On they passed along the walls of the houses. He believed he was imagining things. Then there was a crash in the hall. Zoom! A terrific blast of air blew him against the wall. He did not grasp what was happening. Zoom! A second crash! Schenke reeled with terror. Window panes were shattered and fell with slates and tiles into the street. Then he saw the shadows leap forward. They fled in the direction of the Town Hall. With trembling hands he raised his rifle and shot blindly after them. Then men came out of the police station through the broken windows. Terrified and confused, some of them ran without looking round on to the Square. They did not know what had happened. The crash had roused them from their slumbers. "Halt!" yelled Schenke. "Don't run too far. Stay where you are and be ready to shoot."

In a few seconds they had thrown themselves down behind a projecting wall and were shooting over towards the Town Hall. "That was the greencoats," said Schenke. "But the devil knows how they got here!"

For a time this remained a riddle to many. To break into the centre of the strongly-held district must have required both courage and a knowledge of the locality. A hole gaped in the wall of the police station ; the floor had been torn up right through to the cellar by a bomb.

A comrade had roused the men resting in Hoffrogge's Public House ; they seized their weapons and rushed out in the street.

Women screamed from the Schwanhild Schools. It was the nurses who were attending to the wounded in the milk dépôt on the Church Hill. The shock troops of the green-coats had forced their way as far as that ; they wanted to free their beleaguered comrades and had made use of the streets from Frillendorf to Stoppenberg, which were poorly guarded.

The militia dragged out the wounded and the women. Then the workers came up. Firing began at once on both sides. Under cover of the darkness the greencoats managed to escape. They fled, pursued by the workers' forces, along the road to Frillendorf without having gained their objective. Up on the railway bridge the pursuers met some frightened miners. "Why didn't you keep a look-out ?" "You must have slept well!" "You old women, you!" "The greencoats came without our knowledge." "Then you were asleep." "The gang took us by surprise. The sentries at the cross roads are dead."

A little way behind the Town Hall a miner was lying in the road with a bullet through his head. He had not taken part in the fighting and seemed to have been on his way to the suburb. The greencoats had shot him. The body was brought to the police station. Then the workers went on to the cross roads. There they found two miners with their skulls smashed in ; they had been struck with rifle butts. Their bodies were also brought to the station.

Two other corpses lay in front of the dairy. Trembling, the nurses who had fled after their rough handling, reported that the greencoats had burst open the door, thrown the

wounded from their beds in spite of their protests, had taken them outside and struck down helpless men with rifle butts.

Mad fury seized the workers. Attacks on the beleaguered villa were still in progress. One volley of hand grenades after another crashed against it and burst with a deafening din. A machine gun from the Church Hill fired without intermission on the house. The resistance of the defenders weakened ; about four o'clock in the morning a white flag was hung out.

The greencoats had surrendered.

"Come on out!" The workers stood before the hall door which was riddled with shots and shouted to the greencoats. "Hurry up, or it'll be the worse for you, you curs!"

"Spare us!" begged the greencoats.

"Out you come!"

The greencoats still hesitated. Then one of the workers grew angry. "We are going to blow up the door and walls. Out you come!" The police huddled together, grey with fright, and almost fell out of the door, holding up their hands.

"Don't kill us!" they begged. They were led away.

CHAPTER XX

THE greencoats had not only made a raid from Frillendorf in the course of the night, they had also come down with a strong line of defence from the Cattlemarket. However, the sentries at the railway bridge had noticed them and withdrawn as far as the railway station, from whence they had welcomed their advance with a raking fire. The attack was checked, but the gunfire lasted till just before sunrise. The militia tried by repeated charges to break through the workers' lines and penetrate to the villa. Raup wheeled his detachment round and caught them on the flank. The attacks crumpled up, one after another, under the cross fire.

It was about six o'clock in the morning. Raup was hastily drinking a mug of hot coffee, which a woman from the Feldstrasse had brought him, when a courier arrived. "The attack will begin. The reinforcements are here." "The reinforcements are here. We are to attack!" The news flew from man to man. At that very moment the bombing squads of the storming parties were already in action. It had now got light enough for them to see the greencoats running uncertainly here and there. They were shooting at the detachments, crawling along the streets from one patch of cover to another to reach the railway station.

"Rapid fire!" ordered Raup. The greencoats, more and more cut off, tried to save themselves by defending themselves in the houses. And then, in full flight, they gave up their line of defence and hurried up the hill again towards the Cattlemarket. Salvoes crashed after them. With dogged endurance the workers had now captured the last

houses on the Essen Road. Detachments marching through the streets came within range of the machine guns in the Cattlemarket. Those from the Feldstrasse went on at the double to the Freistein Brickworks. "Machine guns! here!" yelled Raup. The crews stumbled over the frozen furrows and threw themselves and their machine guns in behind the walls of the brickworks.

Then they began firing. Machine guns also rattled from the railway station and the refuse dump. A perfect hail of shot descended on the Reichswehr in the Cattle-market.

In the meanwhile the workers' detachments which had concealed themselves in the Essen Road on the right of the small railway station and to the left in the shelter of the shrubs round the Tivoli Pond, deployed in a wave of attack up to the railway embankment, where Zermack's miners were keeping up a sharp flanking fire on the Cattle-market. Fresh detachments appeared, marching to the singing of the "International."

It was a magnificent morning, the 19th of March. The sunlight, quivering in countless drops of dew, lit up the workers' confident faces, flowed into their tired bodies and infused new strength into them.

"Comrades, double march—left—left—left!" As formerly on the parade ground they deployed in the shape of an extended bow, doubling with powerful rapid movements over the dewy ground. Another sprint, and they threw themselves to the earth, drew their guns into position and fired a few shots to cover those running up behind them. Not behind a white-faced, trembling lieutenant as in the old days. Now they advanced without a leader. Each one was a leader. They were soldiers from choice, their heart was in the business. No longer the hateful deadening obedience to superiors. They charged unhesitatingly towards death, which raced towards them from dozens of machine guns. And they knew why! They fought not for a small group of war profiteers and ex-

ploiters, but for themselves, for the freedom of the working class.

A very young boy fastened a piece of red cloth on a stick ; he waved his improvised banner. "Come on, follow the flag !" he yelled to a detachment which was waiting, and leapt over some iron railings. Twenty or thirty men followed him and leapt over the fence.

"Now to the right !" They rushed forward to the right of the brickworks, still at the double, past the buildings to the first houses in Freistein. Then they fired from the houses, from any cover they could find, at the Cattle-market, which was still a few hundred yards away. Fritz Raup let part of the group get ready to run on again. August Bramm was running in front of him with five miners. Suddenly, as he ran, he clutched at his left leg, crumpled up and fell to his knees.

Raup saw this as he was running and, yelling to his men "Go on !" dashed up to the wounded man. "What is it, August ?" Bramm mastered the faintness which had seized him when he saw the blood spurting, pressed both hands against his shattered leg and clenched his teeth. "Bone broken, Fritz. Don't wait, go on ; I'll be all right alone."

Froth came on his lips and his face was distorted with agony, but he refused Raup's help and waved him on. "Go on, Fritz ; go on."

Fritz sprang up and, bending low, ran after his companions. Bramm rolled himself behind a heap of tiles for shelter and tore a piece out of his coat to bind up his gaping wound, from which blood was freely flowing. The storm troops leapt over him as they ran, shouting encouragement to him. He nodded, waving them on. Near him an elderly man lay on the ground. His body contracted in death agony and then lay motionless. Blood flowed from a gun-wound in his head over the few blades of grass near him. Even in death his thin brown hand grasped his old musket.

The left wing had now been strengthened. The comrades from Hagen, Gelsenkirchen, Dortmund and Rothausen had arrived. Smaller detachments were sent out at intervals under leaders who knew the locality, over to Salkenberg, with orders to push on to Goldschmidt's Factory and go round the Cattlemarket and attack it from the city side.

Jupp Zermack armed a section with bombs and crawled with it along the railway embankment to the fence surrounding the Cattlemarket. There the firing was weak. By the morning light he saw the red army men rushing forward to battle on his right.

"Get your grenades ready," he whispered to his neighbour. "Pass the word along." Then he worked himself cautiously to the outside and peered over into the Cattle-market. A shed blocked his view. Behind the shed clicked a machine gun. A hoarse, angry voice shouted, "No one is to run away from here. Do you understand? You are to go on firing."

"Are the reds here already then?" quavered another. His voice shook with mortal fear.

"You're to keep on firing, you cowards!" yelled the first. The machine gun rattled. Zermack gave the miners a sign. They drew nearer to him. "Take care." He pointed with his finger in the direction of the machine gun. "All throw your grenades over at once. . . . Then over the wall and clear them out!"

"Ready!" The pins of the grenades were withdrawn. "Ready, fire!" The bombs whirled over. The throwers ducked low and waited, tense with excitement. Whizz, bang, crash! Pieces of mortar, fragments of wood and stone flew in the air, yells and screams were heard. The machine gun was silent.

"Over you go!" yelled Raup and leapt with one mighty bound over the wall. One after another the miners sprang after him and ran round the shed. There lay dead and wounded, the wounded screaming. Behind the building greencoats were running from shelter to other sheds.

"Follow them up!" shouted Zermack, and more missiles hurtled through the air. Bang, zoom, bang!

There was no more attempt at resistance. The green-coats were taken by surprise. From the Stoppenberg Road the workers climbed over the walls and railings, smashed holes in the fences and streamed, shouting, into the Cattle-market, filling it to overflowing. Here and there were desperate groups in green uniforms. They still fired at the attackers at a few yards range; then they were felled with blows from rifle butts.

"Comrades, mercy!"

"Forward!" Bones cracked like rotten wood. A human ball rolled yelling over the ground, a worker and a greencoat, weaponless, each with his fingers round his enemy's throat; their legs kicked and their eyes started, thick and bloodshot, from their heads. Hate against hate! The rifle butt of one of the advancing workers crashed down. The skull of the greencoat was smashed. The fingers of the dying man fastened yet more tightly on the living one, who, spattered with blood, shrieked in terror; they tore the dead man away from him.

"On, on!" A bugle shrilled from the street. It was the "International." A grey, scurrying mass of men moved up the hill towards Essen. The sun was mirrored in their weapons. The greencoats were unable to escape from the Cattlemarket. In front of them, down the street, came the workers from the eastern side of the city. The greencoats, white as chalk, piled their weapons and trembled and begged for mercy; they expected death. The prisoners were led away. Some were in their shirt sleeves; they had thrown away their uniforms to escape the hatred of their captors.

At the Cattlemarket lay many dead, greencoats and workers, who had been killed during the last few minutes. Those workers who had no guns threw themselves on the weapons which were lying round. They brought the abandoned machine guns into the ranks and formed

groups, leaders being quickly found. The most experienced man among them, the calmest and most courageous, became the leader. The others obeyed him without question.

"Forward, comrades! We must advance still further!" They took the machine guns and boxes of ammunition in their strong hands and hung grenades round themselves.

CHAPTER XXI

IN the street the bugle was still playing the "International." From a thousand lusty throats the song swelled forth, and even penetrated to the wretched tenements in Freistein, where workers woke to new hope after hours of mortal fear.

At the entrance to the city Zermack and Raup met. Just then a section of the special constables who had been taken prisoner was being led past. Their faces were like death masks; only one in the rear of the ranks had an unnatural sort of smile on his lips. He was telling some story to the workers in disjointed sentences and pointing towards the centre of the city.

"Did you lose many men?" Zermack asked his friend.

"About half a dozen dead and wounded. August Bramm has a leg out of action."

"Badly hurt?"

"One right on the knee."

"How his party will curse him for that!" observed Zermack thoughtfully.

"August has only done what his party once considered right. Bramm is a proletarian."

At this moment there was an obstinate house-to-house struggle going on in the outer streets of the city. The greencoats had to be hunted out of cellars and flats, and even from under beds.

"Take care!" yelled a worker from the junction of Stoppenberg Road and Cattlemarket Square. "Look out! They are firing from the church tower!"

A couple of police snipers had occupied the church tower and fired with certain aim at those unlucky men who came

along the street ignorant of their danger. They took cover and discussed what to do.

"Let's go to the rifle butts and attack from there with machine guns and bombs." They went round Cattlemarket Square and fired from the butts and other protected spots on to the church. Under this cross-fire the greencoats escaped from the church and disappeared.

Fritz and Zermack now ran to the Cattlemarket. The workers were now pushing forward on all sides. "Let one detachment go to Segeroth Barracks; there are still green-coats there," called a tall leader. Crowds of workers went off in that direction at once; a grey stream, however, still flowed towards the Town Hall.

Near Zermack a shop door was echoing under blows from a rifle butt. "What are you doing?" he asked a truculent-looking fellow.

"There are cigars and fags in there," he replied, grinning, and struck the door still harder.

"That won't do," said Zermack angrily and elbowed the fellow to one side.

"What does it matter to you what I'm doing?" said the fellow, pushing him, and tried to go on with his work.

"There'll be no looting here, my boy," said Zermack in threatening tones. "Keep your hands off things!"

The other laughed in his face. "What are we having a bloody revolution for? What we win is ours. That's enough of it." He swung his weapon and winked at the bystanders. "Come on, give us a hand."

Then Zermack's hand gripped him by the scruff of his neck. "Damn it, we'll see whether you'll do as I tell you!" His left hand held fast to the fellow's collar, and his right smashed straight into his coarse, dishonest face. "If you've only come with us to see what you can lay your hands on, then go to the devil, you swab!" Jupp Zermack shook the fellow like a bundle of rags, and with such force that his gun flew from his hand as he tried to defend himself. Then he flung the terrified, struggling object with a mighty

heave among the onlookers. "That's the sort of swine, comrades, who comes with us to pinch things."

"Swat him!" "String him up!" yelled some of them. The fellow slipped between their legs and ran away down the Grabenstrasse, leaving his cap and gun behind him. Loud laughter and curses followed him till he disappeared round the corner of the street.

"We've nothing in common with wasters like that, comrades," said Zermack. "These are the sort of people who don't care who wins or who loses. The chief thing for them is that they will be able to pinch something."

There was no more conversation. They had gone a little way down Cattlemarket Street when something crashed down in front of them and tore up the pavement. "Down!" yelled Raup, and dragged Zermack down with him. Then came the noise of the explosion. A shower of débris rained down on them; two workers screamed with pain.

"What a devilish thing to do!" said Zermack angrily. "Here, quick!" Raup dragged him after him. "I know where the thing came from. We'll get that fellow." He drew Zermack into a house. The rest stood outside and waited for them. "They are civilians," whispered Raup on the stairs. They kept their guns ready. Cautiously he looked up the stairs and mounted. There was no one there. They climbed to the third story. Raup pointed to a door. "There, it came out of that flat. I saw an arm." "Then we'll go in," said Zermack, and knocked on the door with the butt of his gun. They heard a woman scream. There was a hasty exchange of words. "My God, Gerhard, hide yourself!" "Don't open the door," a boy's voice replied. "Yes, open it!" Zermack got angry, he pushed with his shoulder to the door. In an instant he nearly fell full length into a small anteroom. Raup sprang after him and collided with a woman who stood in front of the kitchen door.

"What do you want here?" screamed the woman. Raup pushed his way into the kitchen and rushed after a

lad, who fled into a neighbouring room. "Stop, you little snot! I'll give you hand grenades!" Then Zermack heard yells; Raup had caught the lad and was beating him.

"Leave the boy alone! You scoundrel! Stop; don't hit him!" screamed the woman. She struggled with Zermack, who prevented her from entering the room. "The boy—he is beating him to death!"

"I'll tear his ears off; I'll break the little bastard's jaw, the little swine!" threatened Raup, and brought a tall, thin student from the other room, who was scratching, howling and biting. "Why did you throw that bomb, eh?" yelled the exasperated Raup and shook him till his bones rattled.

"Oh, God, oh, God!" moaned the woman and wrung her hands. "Please, please, let the boy go; it was only silliness on his part!" "Death to the red swine!" screamed the student.

But now Zermack's patience was at an end. He gripped the youth by the collar and dragged him along. The woman ran after him. "Murder, murder, you brutes of reds! Let my son go!" She clung to Raup's arms. "My ch—ild, my ch—ild!" she screamed at the top of her voice.

Zermack paid no heed to her. He dragged the student down the stairs. Raup warded off the woman, who was almost tearing his coat to pieces. Down below Zermack delivered the student to two men. The workers would have beaten him to death; the bomb had wounded two of them; they lay in an entrance hall nearby.

"Is that the swine?" "Give him one on the jaw with a rifle butt!" "He's already had his deserts," said Raup, and told him to clear off.

The men hurried away towards the Horsemarket, whence shots were ringing out. Raup and Zermack followed them. A group of greencoats had occupied the houses, hidden themselves there, and were just being dislodged. They

ran out over the square, but crumpled up under the workers' fire.

About the same time shock detachments composed of workers from Old Essen and Segeroth stormed the Segeroth Barracks, which up to the time of the taking of the Cattle-market had been defended by a very strong garrison.

Now masses of workers, freed from here, were streaming towards the city, thronging along the Grabenstrasse into the Limbeckerstrasse and on into Koppstadt Square, where the first of the attackers on the city had partially barricaded themselves and were firing at the Town Hall, which was strongly garrisoned. Trench mortars were throwing their missiles into the Town Hall.

Paul Rentel, who had come up from the Söllingstrasse along the Beustrasse with some comrades from other towns—he had undertaken to lead them because he knew the district—worked his way further along the rifle range down to the Steelertor and reached the Burgplatz with his company. There, near the Church of the Three Crosses, they took cover and fired over the Kettwigerstrasse.

A car full of greencoats came from Theatre Square, seeking to reinforce the garrison of the Town Hall, when suddenly on the Burgplatz, from every sort of cover and hiding place imaginable, a heavy fire was opened. An officer who had leapt from the car in the confusion and tried to run away was shot dead on the pavement. The driver of the car turned it round under fire and raced back again to Theatre Square, his passengers frightened to death and having suffered severe losses. The workers continued firing after it till it was out of sight. Paul Rentel, who was in the immediate vicinity of the Town Hall, passed the word to the others to fire on the building.

Rentel had gathered together some of the bravest comrades around him and given them grenades to have ready. "We'll work our way round to the back and throw a few in," he explained; "then the miners in Cattlemarket Street will get some air!"

They agreed and leapt past the church, behind the shrubs and across the street into the alleys round the Town Hall. "Bombs ready!" called Rentel and slung one with terrific force through one of the windows.

"Cease fire!" A flag of truce flew from one of the windows. The firing on Cattlemarket Street and Koppstadt Square ceased. From all the streets approaching the Town Hall excited workers pressed forward to surround the main entrance of the building, on the steps of which appeared some civilians. One of these was holding a white flag and making signs to the angry workers.

Zermack and Raup, who had been shooting together from Koppstadt Square, pushed their way through the crowd to the front to see what was happening. They heard one of the civilians speaking to the workers from the steps. "Friends, we have been negotiating with the garrison. . . ." Beside him stood another man in civilian clothes, who at a glance could be seen to be an officer in disguise.

"There won't be any negotiations; get back inside!"

A crowd of workers stormed up the steps; one gave the civilian a shove and forced his way through the throng. Zermack and Raup also rushed up the steps and into the corridor. There the greencoats, who had been promised a safe exit, were waiting. Their faces were a picture when they suddenly saw the workers in front of them.

"Give up your guns and get out!" yelled the workers. "Forward march, or there'll be trouble." The greencoats surrendered their weapons with alacrity. Under a protest from the officer in plain clothes, group after group was disarmed and marched out.

"Hands up, forward march!" The civilians squeezed their way into the crowd. The workers at once ran up a red flag over the Town Hall. The second fortress of the city had fallen. It was bound to surrender, surrounded and attacked as it was on every side. A quantity of guns, arms, ammunition and grenades were captured, also lorries and other means of transport.

The red front rolled onwards. Larger and larger grew the battalions of fighting workers, swelled by fresh contingents, which pushed their way over the Burgplatz along the Steelerstrasse, forward everywhere to the Post Office Buildings and the Central Station, where the rest of the greencoats and special constables had gathered and fortified themselves for a desperate resistance.

In the Kettwigerstrasse the crowds of workers halted. "They are camped in the Post Office. Bring up your bombs!"

Then machine guns began to rattle. Shock troops advanced within range and had to retreat with losses. "Go to the Guild Hall and fire from there."

Some machine-gun sections picked up their weapons and ran across the Burgplatz through the Vereinstrasse and occupied the Guild Hall, from the windows of which they maintained a steady fire on the Post Office. Then the Railway Station garrison opened fire and disturbed the shooting from the Guild Hall.

Raup had joined a machine-gun section. He was in the Kettwigerstrasse, separated from Zermack. Now he was looking for a favourable emplacement for the gun. In a room occupied by a prostitute a great argument was going on. The miners pushed the woman outside and mounted a machine gun on the window-sill. From there they could fire into the windows of the Post Office; beneath them a machine gun was firing at the station. From time to time at the windows of the Post Office could be seen the pallid faces of the greencoats, and their hands hurling grenades. The street shook and trembled with the crashing of continual explosions.

CHAPTER XXII

A S soon as he was locked in Franz Kreusat had a look round his cell. It was a few feet wide and six feet in length, had grey-washed walls ; fastened against one wall was a camp bed, and there was also a stool. High up, scarcely within reach of his finger-tips, was a small barred window. The cell was in semi-darkness. Franz smothered a cry of joy. Beside a small table stood an earthenware jug. He seized it with trembling hands ; the water was stale and had been there for some time. For all that he drank, drank long and thirstily, put it down and then drank again. When he had drunk enough he sat down on the stool and tried to collect his thoughts. He knew well enough where he was. He was in the gaol for prisoners on remand. The greencoat had said he was to go before the court martial. This did not worry him. It was a relief to him not to have to look at their faces any longer. "What were the comrades doing now, Zermack and Raup ? And what was Mother doing ? "

His mother was sure to be torturing herself with anxiety for him. If only she did not love him so much ! "Do take care, my boy," she had wailed when he went to his first shift in the mine. She had eaten nothing, and had sat in idleness till he returned. Then she had tended the first scars and cuts which he had received from the coal and stones.

Then had come the war. "If only they don't kill you ! My boy, my poor boy !" Then she was strong and healthy. When his two brothers had fallen and he had come back from the war alone he almost failed to recognize her. Only her great anxious eyes were the same, and they seemed to have become more sunken. In them were mirrored the terror and darkness of the war years that had passed.

"Now you must never go away from me again, my boy," she had said as she helped him out of his uniform. And every night she had crept to his bedside and watched over him as she had done when he was in his cradle.

"Mother, mother!" The cry dashed itself vainly against the walls of the cell as it was wrung from him. They had imprisoned him, beaten him, why? He had to go before the court martial, why? They would shoot him or beat him to death, why? Because the workers had got weary of oppression and injustice and had begun to defend themselves against their oppressors.

Franz forgot his mother. He remained standing up and stared at the silent stone walls. His face lost its soft, tender expression and became harder, and seemed to turn also to stone. He clenched his teeth and walked restlessly up and down, his arms crossed behind his back and his head sunk in contemplation of the brown floor of the cell, pursued by thoughts which lashed and tortured him. Hour after hour he tramped up and down in silence. At last his tread became slower and heavier. He sat down again on the stool and brooded. Then sleep which he so much needed came over him, heavy as lead. Somewhere he still heard a rattle of keys, and a harsh voice ringing out, then his head drooped forward. Franz did not even notice how he fell like a sack from the stool on to the floor of the cell.

CHAPTER XXIII

R AUP stopped firing. From a window in the Post Office a white flag was waving to and fro ; the firing in various parts of the building ceased. With triumphant shouts the workers ran from the Kettwigerstrasse and across the Station Square to the Post Office. They were just at the door when grenades whirled from the building into the middle of the crowd. Packed together as they were, they scattered and ran back along the streets to cover. The ruse had succeeded only too well. Dead and wounded covered the square and lay at the opening of the Kettwigerstrasse.

Cursing, Fritz Raup lay behind his gun and fired at the Post Office like one possessed. Belt after belt of ammunition rattled through. The barrel became red hot. The Post Office windows were shattered. Then the shock troops advanced in front of the building with loads of bombs. They were determined. "Now or never!" They hurled the first volley against the heavy door. The machine guns in the Guild Hall kept the garrison of the Railway Station in check. There was the roar of an explosion. The door was smashed to atoms.

At the same moment shouts were heard from the Railway Station, where the workers had attacked from the rear. The advance guard rushed into the Post Office and drove out the defenders, who fled headlong down the stairs through a rain of blows.

At the Railway Station, from which a section of "specials" had also been shooting, the same thing had happened. With bloodstained faces and torn clothing, holding their arms high, the prisoners were led away. Some of them,

escaping in the confusion, turned in full flight along the Huysenallee back to Rüttenscheid, pursued by a long grey stream of angry workers.

"Forward to the Haumannshof! Free the prisoners!" On rushed the quickest in chase of the fugitives, giving them no rest. Zermack gazed over the heads of the crowd, looking for his friend Raup among them. He found him among some miners he knew. "Hi! Fritz boy, come here!" Zermack waved his big hand till Raup noticed him. "Jupp, just a minute!" Then they marched on together.

"Shall we find them alive?" asked Raup. Zermack also looked anxious. "Shall we find them at all? Maybe they are dead in some corner."

Beside them trotted a curious specimen of a man. "Schnidder, hey Schnidder, you crazy idiot! Why have you loaded yourself up like that?" laughed those who recognized him. "Like an army service corps wagon!" "Eh, Schnidder, are you an ammunition column?"

Raup laughed with them. "Do you know him, Jupp?" The dwarf, Schnidder, had so far arrived everywhere too late. At the storming of the Cattlemarket he was sleeping at the Police Station; the miners had let him sleep on intentionally. He first woke up when the storming party was at the Post Office. He had taken his rifle and bombs forthwith and gone after them as a "reinforcement." He arrived there too late also and now joined up with the Stoppenberg contingent which was marching on the Haumannshof. His heavy 98mm. bore gun nearly dropped off his tiny shoulders. He fastened the strap tighter, with a sigh, and smiled at Zermack, screwing up his eyes. "We've done it, what do you think of it, eh? I've always said, go for 'em and we'd have had the guns long ago. But the fakirs didn't agree!" Loud laughter followed and someone shouted, "Schnidder, you'll have to be Police President. Get ready!" "He must have a car. Go on, requisition a car for Schnidder!"

"I can walk well enough, you snivelling brats! You

make me Police President and you'll learn something!" Schnidder's thin little beard bristled. Mischief shone in his merry eyes. " Sons of bitches, you'll be drilled then till your rags drop off!"

" That's militarism; the villain will put on the old drill again!" " Give him a punch in the eye!"

The dwarf laughed. " Then you'll get it!" In spite of all his efforts he could hardly keep up with them. The miners wanted to take his gun and hand grenades from him. " No, that won't do. I can't go to the Haumannshof without them! When it's time I'll use the things," he remonstrated.

Those in front had turned into the Zweigerstrasse. The last greencoats had left the Police Headquarters in full flight and withdrawn in the direction of Mülheim.

Franz was feverish; his sleep was an uneasy doze full of confused dreams and nightmares. During the night he had heard the shooting clearly. He understood now the conversation of the greencoats who had brought him there. In his sleep it seemed to him that the shooting had got nearer. It came from the direction of the city. He also heard the loud explosions and struggled between hope and fear. In the morning a sour-faced warder came in and let him fill his bowl with brown skilly brought by another prisoner. He asked the warder where the sound of shooting came from.

" I don't know," he replied. The prisoner winked at Franz with a meaning look in his eyes. Then the door slammed to again. Franz ate the thin skilly and listened intently in the direction of the city. They were exciting hours.

Then he heard a noise, a trampling and stamping as of thousands of feet. Then he heard loud calls and cries of joy. " Are they coming?" His lips began to tremble. The blood rushed to his head. " Wait, Franz, patience. Don't go crazy!" He forced himself to keep calm.

The shouting got very near. "Blow up the gates if they won't open easily!" "Out of the way, throw your grenades." Then he held his breath. Bang, bang, brroom! Iron creaked and crashed with a noise like thunder. Franz heard with indescribable joy the crowds of men pouring into the prison yard.

"Free the political prisoners! Where are the politicals?" "Here, here!" yelled the prisoners from the windows.

Mighty blows echoed against the cell doors. Again iron doors were burst open by explosions and the rescuers entered the building. Franz seized his stool and hammered against the door, shouting hoarsely: "Here! Here's a political!"

The corridor hummed with men's voices. Cell doors were flung open. "Political prisoners here?"

"Yes. What is it?"

"Out. You are free!" Not all were actually political prisoners, but all said they were.

"Mahler! Kreusat! Franz Kreusat! Is Franz Kreusat here?" It was Raup, Fritz Raup! Zermack also roared, "Where is Franz Kreusat?"

"Here!" Franz hammered on the door with his fists and with his stool. Then he stumbled out. Everything seemed to spin round in circles. Hands supported him, shook him: "Frankie, Franz, boy!" They were dear, rough, familiar voices, the voices of comrades. "Free, Franz, do you hear? You are free." Franz wept and laughed.

"Are you giddy, lad?" Raup's voice trembled. His eyes were moist and he drew his sleeve surreptitiously over them. "We've got the city, Franz. We've driven out the greencoats. Red soldiers are there now. We are there!"

Soon they were in the yard, where the workers were standing round the other prisoners. Mahler was talking. "Soon I'd have gone mad." "We were to be flogged to death as soon as a shot was fired."

Karl Powodny was gesticulating in another group. "If

I get hold of them. Boys, if I only catch one who's been shooting ! ”

He showed them his head. “ It’s all right again now, comrades, but you should have seen us after we had been flogged. If I catch one he’ll be for it.”

The dark man was also there. He had already got a gun and was collecting the workers round him. “ Comrades, to Police Headquarters ! Who’s coming with us ? ” He waved to the others and went off to Police Headquarters.

“ To Stoppenberg ! ” said Zermack. In the main street fresh contingents met them. They sang songs and greeted those returning with loud cheers. They met stretcher bearers with Red Cross armlets carrying or supporting wounded men, on whose careworn, dirty faces shone the legend : “ We have won, we have won, we have won ! ”

It was the mob, the mob of whom the bourgeoisie was wont to speak so contemptuously, the mob, Spartacus ! The men who every day were found working in the mines, at the machines, driven by force to slave for their bread. The despised and oppressed working men who had known nothing but the factory, the grey tenements, children’s misery and the horrors of the mine and of hunger !

CHAPTER XXIV

F RANZ found his mother in the company of Theresa. Directly she saw him she fell to the floor like a log and lay as if dead.

Franz was frightened. "Mother!" he called and, rushing to her side, knelt down and shook her, while Theresa tormented him with reproaches. "You cause her all this worry and grief," she said accusingly.

Frau Kreusat opened her eyes again. "Fancy you frightening me like that!" said Franz in relief. He lifted her to her feet again. She looked at him uncertainly, in bewilderment.

"You—are not—going away—from me any more?" she said and clutched his coat with her groping hands.

"I can't stay at home," he replied. "We have taken the city but the fight is not over yet. We must go on."

Theresa grumbled. "Haven't you had enough of it? You rush about with them like an idiot!"

Franz looked at her angrily. "I can't hold back when thousands are in it. I'd be ashamed to stay at home when I am needed outside."

"You are not obliged to go."

"I am not forced to . . . but . . ." He turned to his mother. "If you could only understand, none of us would go under fire without cause, for nothing at all. We cursed when they batoned us, when we had to run from the militia's bullets. And now we have arms; we have occupied the city and the police are flying from us. You should see how happy the miners are. Tell them they ought to hand over their guns! Just tell them! It would be like a wind fanning the flames!"

Frau Kreusat stuck stubbornly to her point. "Don't go with them any more, my boy. I well believe it is as you say, but *you* will stay here, won't you ? "

Franz felt as hopeless as if he were running his head against a wall of rubber, which always flung him back. "Mother, understand once and for all ! I can't stay away from the fight because of you. I can't do it."

Frau Kreusat stared at him. Then she burst into tears.

"Don't you see ? " said Theresa. "Don't you see what you are doing to her ? "

"Be quiet !" he shouted. "Don't interfere ! I can't do anything else. Don't you understand ? I can't."

"Hm," said Theresa and looked at Frau Kreusat, expecting support from her, but she only said, "Go now ; leave the boy alone."

"I'll have nothing more to do with him," said Theresa angrily ; "he can do what he likes as far as I am concerned. I'm off." She took a few steps towards the door, tore it open, turned once more on the threshold and said snapishly, "I'm tired of waiting, I tell you that. I, too, want something from life. If you are more interested in this sort of silly nonsense than in me, then I'll look for someone else."

She was gone. Franz laughed. There was more anger than mirth in his laugh. Her conduct irritated him. It reminded him too much of her father, who always put himself and his opinions above everything else.

"Let her go to the devil !" He waved his hand in the air as if he were freeing himself from something. "Leave her alone. Let her go and find someone else if she likes. I don't want to go and quarrel about it."

"Franz !" called the sick man from the bedroom. A hollow cough followed. "Go and see Father," said Frau Kreusat ; "he's worse again. He finds it hard to get his breath. A little bit of sun would do him good."

Franz went in. The old man sat on the edge of the bed breathing hard, and blinked at him. "Where were

you ? " he asked in a husky voice. " I was in quod. They arrested us," replied Franz.

" Your mother was terribly worried," said the old man. He looked at Franz's disfigured face. " Did they beat you up ? You look very knocked about." Franz told him what had happened to him. The sick man spat fiercely and interrupted him from time to time, saying, " Yes, they *are* like that ! They're like that ! "

Frau Kreusat had pulled herself together. " Are you hungry ? " she asked when Franz reappeared in the kitchen.

" I can't eat very easily," replied Franz and made a wry face. For the first time she listened carefully to him. It had struck her as strange that he made a grimace when he spoke.

" What's the matter with you ? " she asked.

" I've almost bitten my tongue out." He drew his mother to the window and showed her his tongue. " My God ! " she screamed and began to tremble again.

" Now do you realize the way they beat us up ? " said Franz. " With their fists, with rubber tubing, rifle butts, anything that came handy. That's why I am going with the other comrades to see that they don't come back again."

He drank his coffee and swallowed cautiously the broth she had prepared for him. While he was eating she crouched on the seat by the stove and watched his face. When she saw that he was in pain she said anxiously, " Eat slowly, boy, you've plenty of time. Take your time, Franz."

Franz stood up and put on his jacket. She looked shyly at him. " Put on your overcoat. It is very cold ; that bit of sunshine is deceptive. Don't forget your scarf, boy. Have you had enough to eat ? "

Franz was now dressed. " I will go to the police station first ; we are meeting there. I may have to go away again. Don't worry, mother ! " Then he went out.

" Silly boy, silly boy ! " she sighed. Then she took from the clothes hook the torn coat which Franz had left behind. She stroked it lovingly and began to mend it.

Martin Kreusat could no longer rest in the bedroom.
“Did you hear what they did to them?” he asked.

She nodded. Then she raised her thin face and said, “They have hurt his tongue; it’s all split and swollen.”

“Now you see!” replied Martin and drew his stooping form up to its full height. “Why did they beat them? Are they human? I say, as I’ve said before, that those brutes are not human. You can’t restore law and order by such methods. But they’ll pay for what they have done, believe me. A tooth for a tooth. . . .”

A siren shrieked in the city. Frau Naumann came in all out of breath. “Just think, now, they have taken the whole city except the water tower! The greencoats are defending themselves there tooth and nail.”

Frau Kreusat glanced at the bustling woman and bent over her sewing again as she replied, “The boy had hardly come in before he went out again. What do you think of that?”

“Damn it, if I hadn’t so many kids I’d go with them myself!” replied Frau Naumann and put her brawny hands truculently on her hips. “Franz is a boy who doesn’t spend his time talking, but gets on with the job. You should be glad of it!”

Frau Kreusat looked at her with swimming eyes. “He has hurt his tongue badly. They knocked him about. Just look at his coat! Look here, and here! He’ll only be able to use it for the pit now!”

But Frau Naumann hardly listened to her. “They brought a greencat past,” she went on. “He had thrown his coat off. He spun round and round like a top and kept on shouting ‘Kamerad!’ One of them wanted to knock him on the head with a rifle. Then I yelled, ‘Hi, you son of a bitch, don’t be so silly! You can see he’s so scared already, he can’t stand up.’ So the miner gave up the idea, but he gave him such a kick in the pants that he fell on his knees. What about that? Was it right or wasn’t it?

It'd be different if it were one of those fat fellows, but this one was a poor, half-starved misery like ourselves."

Martin Kreusat panted with excitement. "It's right that they should get a sock in the jaw at least. Send them into the mine for twenty years and they'd soon forget a beating-up. If only I had my breath I wouldn't stick here in this hole!"

Frau Kreusat turned to him with a disapproving glance. "It's got hold of you too," she said. "If the boy could only hear you!" A heavy vehicle rattled over the street. "Now, what's that?" exclaimed Frau Naumann. "I declare, if it's not a cannon!" Martin, who was angry at his wife's reproach and was searching for an appropriate reply, stumbled over to the window as fast as he could. It was true; a gun was being dragged past with difficulty. Only one horse was harnessed to it. On the ammunition chest and on the long barrel sat half a dozen Spartacists, singing a song, a song which Martin had often heard on the lips of contingents marching past. He hummed the chorus after them:

"To Karl Liebknecht our oath we have sworn,
To Rosa Luxemburg stretch forth our hand."

AT Stoppenberg, as everywhere else, an executive council was formed. Mahler was elected president. The first really heated battle of words began that very afternoon. The Independents and a few Majority Socialists began to pick quarrels with one another, and soon actually came to blows. During the confusion Trauten started to speak.

"Comrades," said he, "although I don't approve of such a council as this, yet I am prepared to co-operate in the restoration of normal conditions." When they laughed at him loudly he roared, "Perhaps you will admit that youths such as I saw earlier to-day are swaggering about with guns and molesting the people."

"Jacob is restoring law and order," shouted a miner, and the fat was in the fire again.

Mahler rang his bell and hammered with his fist on the table. "O—order!"

Trauten snorted with rage. "*You* do anything constructive! You are only making a mess of things. Not a trace of democracy! Why don't you let me finish speaking?"

"Don't jabber there, Jacob," grinned Rentel. "Get out of it! What you have to sell is pretty poor stuff!" "Nonsense!" Schenke reproached him. "We are wasting our time. Either we've got to come to some decision or everything will go to hell."

Trauten wanted to enforce his point of view and continued from a chair on which he had climbed. "Listen now, damn you! I have experience; I tell you to behave more intelligently, comrades!"

"Throw him out!" called Karl Powodny. "He has been asleep all night, and now he wants to butt in on our decisions!"

Trauten looked in vain at Mahler. "I have been in the movement since 1889, but that doesn't seem to make any difference," he grumbled and got down from the chair, streaming with perspiration.

"If that's so you've moved precious slowly, Jacob," grinned Rentel.

Another speaker was on his feet. "Comrades, if we sit gossiping here the others won't have much of an opinion of us. Let's decide whether we are an executive committee or not. Outside there is a fight on, and the fighters need reinforcements. So let us get on to the practical work!" Applause greeted this advice.

A second speaker spoke in favour of resuming work. "Miners, so that the women and children may have something to eat, let all those who are not bearing arms go back to the pit."

"Excellent!" called Trauten from the corner into which they had pushed him. "A sensible man at last! Comrades, I propose . . ."

"Drop that, Jacob," Rentel warned him; "they will get angry if you talk any more of your driveling. The best thing you can do is to carry a gun; then you'll be qualified to talk. That to-day is the best qualification for taking part in the discussion."

They took less and less notice of Trauten's interjections. Every now and then someone made a jeering remark to him. "Well," he said at last, "I'm off; it's no good stopping here."

"Off you go, Jacob, and slip under the blankets again," Rentel suggested, and this remark infuriated Trauten. "Shut up! I have been an organized worker since 1889, do you understand that?"

"Then I'm sorry you've learnt nothing from your experience," replied Rentel—this time he grinned no

longer, his square face was stern. "We have not been risking our lives for twenty-four hours to give up all we have won because of your driveling. Either you pick up a gun and go on with us or else go where the pepper grows. We don't need your advice."

That was definite. Trauten made a grimace as if he had swallowed wormwood and went out. "Stay out, man," he advised a worker outside who was about to enter; "it's no use going in. If you say anything they threaten you!"

Mahler had at last got some semblance of order in the meeting when Jupp Zermack came in. "Hullo, Jupp, what's on now?" the miners greeted him.

"Get a machine gun and go down to the water tower," he shouted, out of breath. "What are you doing here?"

"The Executive Council is sitting," explained Mahler, whose face was disfigured, and who was shielding his injured eye.

"Come on out!" Zermack pressed him. "We'll have time for sessions later on. They are still occupying the water tower. We've a lot of dead and wounded there already."

Schenke made a grimace of disgust. "What did I tell you?" Some of the younger men, who were only there to listen, seized their guns and went out. Franz Kreusat went with them.

"Franz, take charge of the reinforcements," said Zermack. "Get a machine gun from the police station and go as quick as you can to the Steelerstrasse."

During these preparations up came Fritz Raup. "Where are you going, Franz?" "To the water tower," he replied. He was helping to load the machine gun into a requisitioned car. The driver of the car was protesting and refusing to take them, making every conceivable excuse. At last Raup got angry. "If you won't drive them, we'll take the car and you'll find yourself in the cellar, my boy. So off you go and look sharp about it!"

The driver cranked up the car, swore vehemently and a moment later was speeding down the Ernestinenstrasse.

"Was it right of us to send Franz?" Raup asked Zermack as the car disappeared.

"Why do you ask?" "Well, you know, the old lady . . ."

"We can't stop fighting on account of wives and mothers," replied Zermack roughly.

Raup looked at him, surprised by the hardness that underlay his words.

"Don't be soft, Fritz. We didn't ask permission of the wives and mothers of the other comrades who have been sacrificed," said Zermack.

"No," agreed Raup.

"Get the boys together for the reserves," ordered Zermack curtly and went on to the police station.

CHAPTER XXVI

IN the Höhnstrasse the driver stopped and refused to go any further.

"Go on, just a couple of minutes and we are there," urged Franz.

"I don't want my car shot to pieces," argued the driver.

"You can carry the gun a few hundred yards."

"It would still take us ten minutes on foot," said Franz. The other men were also annoyed at the driver's delays.

"Hold a pistol to his head, and then he'll go on," someone shouted.

The driver turned round again, grumbling. "I tell you, you'll answer to me for this car if it's blown to pieces."

They went on. Franz had taken out his pistol as a precautionary measure, for he did not trust the driver. At the Eickenscheidt Drive he let him stop. He knew the lie of the land and the parts of the city round the water tower, which rose hard and massive above the leafless branches of the trees in the park. After a short discussion they decided to attack from the drive.

Shots cracked from the surrounding streets and tenements, and machine-gun fire replied from the water tower. Stray shots whirred over the heads of the gun crew as they hurried into position with their weapon. A fierce struggle had been in progress here since midday. The garrison of the water tower consisted partly of militia officers and partly of special constables, who had withdrawn there in a desperate attempt to defend themselves. It was not easy for the besiegers to approach this fortress without losses, for the garrison commanded a good view from the tower and could see exactly when the workers were gather-

ing for a charge. Then the machine guns began to rattle. Numerous hand grenades exploded against the building.

Franz walked round various rows of houses to find a favourable position. The crew was seen by the men in the tower as they drew nearer, and they began to fire on them.

At last they found a fairly sheltered position from which they could fire at the upper loopholes of the tower. Behind the machine gun lay a man whose face was marked by a terrible scar, which gave him a brutal expression as he fired. He kept well sheltered and gave the garrison no chance of hitting him. It seemed as if fresh reinforcements had come up, as frantic machine-gun fire had raged for an hour against the strongly fortified building.

"Stop, don't shoot! Cease fire!" This cry was raised and passed from group to group. "Stop; they are putting out a white flag."

"Take care, they did that at the Post Office too, and then the swine fired again!" Kreusat's men raised themselves cautiously and watched how a crowd of men set off for the tower, from which the white flag was still flying. "Take care, don't leave cover, let them come out themselves instead!" yelled the more cautious.

"Back!" A bomb whirled through the air, and half a dozen others followed. They crashed into the middle of the crowd.

"Back!" "Treachery!" Shots were fired after them as they fled. There were dead in the square, dead in the streets. The white flag disappeared as the bullets sought their victims.

"Blow up the tower! Bring up ammunition!" Their excitement grew. Burning with rage, the workers looked over at the water tower, from the windows and loopholes of which rifles were gleaming.

"Blow it up! Blow up the whole gang of them!" As at the Post Office, daring shock troops fastened charges together and worked their way from cover to cover. Meanwhile every machine gun fired at the tower from every

available position. After a quarter of an hour there was a blaze and the roar of an explosion.

Only some of the charges laid went off. The dangerous labour was resumed. The greencoats were not shooting so strongly now. When machine-gun fire was directed against the massive door of the tower the white flag was hung out again.

The firing stopped, but the workers waited under cover. "Out you come!" they shouted.

"They're coming out," yelled a black-bearded man. "Here they are!" In the open door stood the "specials," white as chalk and trembling.

"Don't shoot!" They held their arms high.

"Keep 'em up." "Take care it isn't a trick!" The workers rushed on the garrison. "Come out, you damned swine! Down the steps!" The screaming men fled into the crowd, driven by hefty blows from behind.

Guns were raised and crashed down. "At 'em!" Shots were fired and fists smashed into faces; rags of uniform came away in clutching fingers.

Franz Kreusat ran after one of the militia who had succeeded in pushing his way through the throng. "Stop!" he yelled. "Will you stop?" The greencat screamed for help and bolted as though the devil were after him. He ran into another group. The butt of a pistol came down on his head and he fell like a log. Franz stood over the dead man and felt no pity for him. "Come on!" he shouted to his companions. In the streets through which they passed wounded men were hobbling; contingents were marching off with their guns unslung, and singing:

". . . Like our hero Liebknecht,
In a martyr's grave."

Franz marched with them in silence, but his eyes were shining. He was FREE.

PART II

CHAPTER I

THREE days had elapsed since the attack of the Ruhr workers on the iron city of Essen. An atmosphere of war reigned in the city. Armed workers thronged the schools and the spaces in front of the public buildings. They voluntarily enrolled for service at the front, which had by now been extended as far as Wesel.

In Stoppenberg also, on the afternoon of the 22nd of March, things were very lively. Fritz Raup collected the forces available for the front outside the police station, where they received their guns and got to know each other. The first detachment was ready and placed in charge of Karl Powodny. It went off in great haste, for, help being needed at Dinslaken, Karl Powodny received orders to get his men to the front as soon as he could. By good luck a lorry was available. Furnished with the necessary equipment, the first detachment went off at full speed at about three o'clock amid the hearty cheers and good wishes of their comrades who still had to wait.

In the space of an hour the second detachment also got its equipment and stood by in marching order. All that was lacking was motor transport to carry them to the front. Franz Kreusat was sitting on the wall with his earline beside him, watching the scene.

"Franz, will you take charge of the second detachment?" Fritz Raup called to him.

"Yes, willingly, as far as I'm concerned, if the lads wish it," replied Kreusat.

"Come on, Franz!" shouted the workers. He got down and walked over to the detachment, which received him with cheers. Schnidder, who was scribbling in a notebook,

screwed up his face and said: "I have taken down all their names. If you are going to take charge of the column, then I'll be easy in my mind. But I'll take charge of one group to see that the boys don't do anything foolish." Peels of laughter followed the little man's speech.

The dwarf was again equipped for active service. Over his tiny chest was passed a machine-gun ammunition belt. From his waist hung tightly-packed cartridge boxes which got in his way as he walked; the inevitable hand grenades were not lacking.

"Schnidder, man, that ox-bone will upset you!" teased Rentel, who had come up and noticed with what difficulty Schnidder was managing his 98mm. bore gun, which kept slipping down from his little shoulder.

"That pistol!" said Schnidder contemptuously. "I've brought something else as well as that!"

"He had a 75 cannon hung round him just now!" One of the miners corroborated him, and the laughter rang out anew.

"Don't laugh at a man," replied the dwarf, ever ready with his tongue. "At least I did not volunteer only for peeling potatoes like some folk." He made off in the confusion and disappeared into the police station, from which came a noise of many voices.

At the police station the district representative was interrogating the bluecoats who had been arrested and imprisoned by order of the Executive Council.

The police superintendent was standing at attention before Mahler. As Schnidder came in he was saying decisively: "Indeed, I don't know, sir. I was off duty on the night in question."

"They're telling the tale," said Schnidder. "They've all been off duty when things have been lively here."

"Indeed, sir, I've really no reason to say . . ."

"Now then, don't stutter," grunted the dwarf. "We all know that." He turned to Mahler and Zermack, who had just appeared at the station. "I have some spare time.

When you are ready to shoot those fellows I'll take charge of the firing party."

"I beg you . . ." stammered the superintendent in terror and raised his arm as if taking the oath; "you will not, my God, no . . ."

"They're afraid!" grinned the dwarf and nudged Zermack. "Just stand them against the wall, and they'll be sick." The bluecoats looked at them with blanched faces; they thought they were going to be shot.

"What shall we do with them?" asked Mahler of the scowling Zermack.

"Shut 'em up till we've more time," he answered. The dwarf was angry and said: "Till they baton us again, you mean!" With a scowling face—and this time he was really in earnest—he returned to his detachment.

"There's fellows for you!" he grumbled and his good humour appeared to have vanished. He sat himself down on the steps, pulled a piece of rag out of his pocket and began to clean his rifle, grumbling to himself the while.

"We must go to the mayor," said Jupp to Mahler when the police had been led away.

"What do you want with him?" said Mahler in surprise and looked inquiringly at Zermack.

"Money," replied Jupp Zermack curtly. "Money to pay our men."

"It's not due yet," Mahler hesitated.

"We can't wait till the gentlemen have taken it away with them."

"Do you mean that we'll collar it?" asked Mahler uneasily.

"If he jibs, he'll go to the cellar."

They went to the Town Hall, but not finding the mayor in his office they turned back and went to his house. A maid-servant came to the door in answer to their ring.

"What do you want?" she asked.

"We have to have a word with the old man," said Zermack.

"The mayor is resting."

"Then he can just get up again," replied Zermack surlily. "We can't take to the blankets any time we feel like it."

"He has hardly had an hour's rest," hesitated the maid.
"He doesn't like being waked before his time."

Zermack toyed grimly with his pistol. "Tell the mayor that the Executive Council wishes to have a word with him," he said.

"Will you wait a moment, please?" said the maid, and went inside. She appeared a moment later and said, "Will you please go back to the Town Hall? The mayor will come to you there."

"Come on!" said Zermack. "Let's hope he won't keep us waiting long."

"I say, we can't very well . . ." hesitated Mahler.

"What?" asked Zermack.

"No, you and I can't demand money like this!"

"In war, all's fair," said Zermack. "We have been taught that a hundred times in Prussia."

"We are not Prussians, Jupp. We are Socialists."

"We can't feed our men or their families on straw or grass, comrade."

"That's true," replied Mahler; "but we are bearing the responsibility."

"You don't seem to have any confidence in yourself," said Zermack. "But if you lack that, Will, have you no faith in our cause?"

"Oh, come!" Mahler was offended.

"You have scruples, comrade, but the militia had none when they nearly clubbed you to death."

"No, that they hadn't. They would have beaten us to death if a shot had been fired that night."

"Then don't talk nonsense. We need money, and how we get it is our affair. We don't want it for ourselves but for our men; it's our responsibility."

They reached the Town Hall and waited. The mayor

was a very long time appearing. Zermack chewed and waited impatiently.

"If he thinks we have time to waste waiting for him, he's mistaken." His fingers toyed with the butt of his pistol.

The mayor came in. "Good day," he said with a cunning and malicious smile; "what is it you need so urgently?"

"We want money," said Zermack curtly.

"Money !!!" said the mayor slowly.

"Yes, money. And we need it at once. We have to pay our men, so that they can get food."

"I can do nothing in the matter, Herr Zermack. You must understand that I certainly cannot give you any. Others decide that. My official authority really does not go so far as that, Herr Zermack."

"Then we will commandeer the funds," said Zermack firmly. The old man laughed derisively. "Only, Herr Zermack, you'll find nothing. We are poor; the municipality is in debt."

Zermack smiled cynically. "You have been pretty canny, but we foresaw that. We shall arrest you and bring you before the Revolutionary Tribunal."

The mayor blenched and began to stutter. "I cannot make money when there is none. I tell you, there is no money in the bank, Herr Zermack."

"I have already told you," replied Zermack, "we shall arrest you if you don't produce that vanished money."

The old man trotted up and down, put his arms behind his back, waved them in the air and tried to explain to them the difficulty he would have in raising money. Zermack stuck obstinately to his threat.

"Why don't you go to the Town Council?" advised the mayor. "There are limits to my official authority."

"Also to our patience," threatened Zermack.

"We could speak to the representatives," suggested Mahler, who was getting uncomfortable under Zermack's stern handling of the situation.

"Yes! do that," urged the old man. "There are partisans of yours among the councillors, too, who would certainly arrange it for you."

"We have no time to waste on conferences," said Zermack and stood up. "You find the money and then you will still be able to tell the council that we insisted on your doing so. If you don't find it, then you know what will happen to you. I'm fed up with this chattering."

"Be careful, Herr Zermack, be careful," warned the mayor. "Don't be too optimistic. You are attaching far too much importance to this little adventure."

"Still, the police and the Noskerites have run away as the result of this 'little adventure,'" replied Zermack. He toyed again meaningly with the pistol on the table, "So," and here he brought down the butt of his pistol on the table, "will that money be forthcoming or not?" The old man looked with despair from one to the other. Mahler sat with his head bowed as if to ward off a blow, and blinked his weary eyes. Zermack waited impatiently: "You'll find it?"

"I will try to get it," groaned the old man. "You are forcing me to do so. You do not realize what a responsibility I am taking upon myself. Believe me, I wish this terrible civil war were at an end and order restored again."

"Aye, I believe it," growled Zermack, who understood the old man's meaning. "You want the sort of order restored under which the worker has nothing to eat, cleans your boots and does all the dirty work for you till the end of his days. When you have the cash ready, you can send us a message at the police station. But don't delay, otherwise . . ." Zermack brandished his pistol in the air, "We shall soon get fed up with waiting, do you understand? Fed up!"

"Good Lord, Jupp," said Mahler when they got outside, "you did go for him! And how he squirmed! But suppose we are beaten, Jupp?"

" Have you forgotten your thrashing already ? " asked Jupp angrily.

" I ? Never ; that I'll never forget."

" Then why talk like that ? "

Mahler was silent, bewildered. " If we hadn't been so soft in 1918 we wouldn't have needed to sacrifice fresh victims to-day, comrade. To hell with your scruples ! The bosses threw theirs away a long time ago. You'll see, if we are beaten ! Even when they are most polite, rubbing their hands and smiling, they're brutes at heart."

CHAPTER II

"YOU'RE doing well, gentlemen," said Fritz Raup sarcastically to them as they met him outside the police station. "So you thought you'd go out for a little walk. . . ."

"And smoke fat cigars." Zermack finished the sentence for him and spat out his plug of tobacco against the wall.

"The detachments are ready to start and I can't get a lorry to take them."

"You must requisition one," said Zermack. "Get an order for one from the President of the Executive."

"With my signature!" exclaimed Mahler in terror.
"They'll use that against me later!"

"To you too this business seems to be only 'the little adventure' the old fellow was talking about," said Zermack angrily.

"Nonsense!" said Mahler, defending himself.

"Then you needn't make a fuss about signing it."

Mahler went with a sullen face into the duty-room.

"What is the matter with him?" asked Raup in astonishment.

"Fear for his own courage," laughed Zermack.

"We must stick behind him and see that he doesn't do anything stupid when he's like this," said Raup, and they followed Mahler into the duty-room. He had already written the order, and handed it to Raup. "You can try now, Fritz," he said; "I have signed it. Perhaps it would be as well to get it countersigned by the mayor."

"That will be enough," answered Raup. "We are all right without the old man." He beckoned to a couple of miners who were talking outside the police station: "Come in here a minute, comrades!" They came up to him at

once. "Take this bit of paper and get a lorry! If the owner gives any trouble, shove him in and bring him along here."

"How? Have we got to *push* the thing?" laughed one of the men.

Raup was at a loss again. "We haven't got a driver either. Damn it, a man can't think of everything!"

Mahler's face cleared. "You can go on foot as far as Essen and then they'll send you on from there in something or other."

"Every district must provide for itself. Hundreds are waiting for transport in Essen." Raup opposed this, for he knew the conditions in Essen. "Where shall we get a driver?"

"What do you want?" A tall iron-worker hoisted himself sleepily from the bench on which till then he had been dozing.

"We want a chauffeur. We've got to fetch a lorry."

"I was assistant driver on one of those things at the front," said the tall man, and stood up, yawning. "Where's the bus?"

"We've got to commandeer one," Raup explained to him; "if you can drive, comrade, collect a man or two and get one, so that the second detachment can start."

"All right!" said the tall fellow and left the guard-room with a couple of men.

"Don't come back without a lorry!" Raup called after them. Mahler ran his hands nervously over his bowed head. He looked out of the window; a small troop was marching past with the tall driver at its head.

Raup nudged Zermack and pointed to Mahler. At last he could restrain himself no longer. "Will, man, what's up with you? I believe you've got cold feet, you dirty dog!"

"I ——" Mahler grinned, but his twitching mouth gave him away. "You're crazy!"

Zermack laughed and went out.

"Pull yourself together," Raup warned Mahler; "the

boys have good noses and soon smell it out when anyone has the wind up."

Franz's men were cleaning their rifles ; the captured guns were rusty and dirty. He himself was polishing a heavy machine gun.

CHAPTER III

BEFORE the police station a crowd had collected round a grey lorry. It was the machine the tall driver had commandeered. As Franz Kreusat walked out he heard the tall man swearing : "The damned thing has gone phut. We can't get her under way, boys. You'll have to go to the front on foot."

"Let me have a look at it," shouted a man in the crowd round the machine. A tall, stalwart man in blue overalls, with an oily peaked cap on his massive forehead, thrust his way forward, pushed the hesitating driver to one side and grasped the crank.

"I'd like to see what you can do with her," grumbled the driver, and looked doubtfully at the man in overalls as he started winding.

"Get out of the way!" he shouted to the crowd which was pressing round the motor, and wound the crank with such strength that the rest gasped in astonishment.

"Whew, that fellow has marrow in his bones!" said Raup to Zermack, who had just come up. "You'd be a mere boy against him, my lad!"

With jerks that swayed the lorry backwards and forwards the man in overalls turned the crank. There was a shaking and whirring noise and a minute later the engine was running and throbbing noisily.

The man in overalls wiped his dripping forehead and said to the other : "Well, now you can start!"

"Won't you take over the driving instead?" asked Fritz, who had pushed his way to the front.

"As you like," replied the other ; "it's all the same to me

whether I stay here or go with the lorry. I drove a machine like that at the front for three years."

"Then off you go!" Raup looked for Franz Kreusat. The latter was standing in silence behind Zermack. "Get ready, Franz, you can start," called Raup.

In five minutes all was ready and the workers climbed noisily into the lorry. A young haulier fastened a little red flag on the front of it. In the front, on the hood of the driver's box, a heavy machine gun was mounted, with its muzzle pointing forwards, the crew installed behind it.

The man in overalls sounded the horn loudly to show he was starting. The dwarf came running out of the police station shouting: "Stop a minute, you idiots, I'm coming with you!"

"Wait a minute." "Help the rascal up," laughed the workers in the lorry to those standing by.

The dwarf, assisted by hefty shoves, sprawled over the side of the lorry amid laughter from the miners and iron-workers. When he was up someone held him fast by one leg. He swore and kicked: "Damn you! Leave go, you dirty dog!"

The miner let go. At that moment the lorry jerked forward and the dwarf tumbled headlong on to the floor. "They're a lot of bastards," he grumbled as he sprawled on the floor amid roars of laughter.

"Look out!" shouted the man in overalls from the driver's seat. The engine thundered and pounded like a restive horse.

"Take care of yourselves, boys," said Fritz Raup as he shook hands with one after another.

"Cheerio, Franz!"

"Cheerio, Fritz!"

"Good luck, Franz!" cried old Schenke and waved his brown hand. "Same to you!" shouted Franz.

Zermack also came to the lorry and called up to Franz Kreusat, "Now you're for it! Keep your pecker up, Frankie. Give it 'em hot and strong!"

"We'll take care of that!" cried the miners. The hooter sounded. The lorry bounded forward and rattled off amid the shouts of passengers and spectators.

As the lorry raced past Tenement 35 it seemed to Franz as if he saw at a third-floor window a grief-stricken face, the anxious countenance of his mother. He had avoided going home for fear of more reproaches. Now he was sorry that he was unable to say a loving word to her, as she was certainly worrying herself to death about him. In order to forget this and to overcome his feeling of weakness, he joined with an unnaturally hearty voice in the song of the red army :

"We fear not, no, we fear not the thunder of the canon,
We fear not, in their strength, Ebert and Scheide-mann.
To Liebknecht, our oath we have sworn,
To Rosa have stretched forth our hand."

On the way they met some men of the red army returning home. Some had bandages covering terrible wounds, while others were carrying the rifles of their wounded comrades. Some were hungrily gnawing hunks of dry bread.

Franz waved to them : "Hallo!" shouted the workers in the lorry, and cheered them. The exhausted men returned their greetings with smiles : "Hurry along to the front, comrades. They're having a hot time up there!"

In the city lorries crammed with armed workers rushed by, among them were women with white armlets and red kerchiefs on their heads.

"Those are the mice with the disinfectants," chirped the dwarf. "Only women, but they have got guts. I saw them in Stoppenberg. There they carried the wounded from the firing zone and shot down the greencoats like sharpshooters."

The dwarf was one of the liveliest in the lorry. He waved whenever a fast two-seater raced past with a red flag flying.

"Those are generals at least," he explained importantly. Despatch riders on bicycles and mounted civilians with carbines on their shoulders dashed past. Trams passed, full of armed workers. Among the singing soldiers were a few solitary worried specimens of the bourgeoisie, crowded in among them with humble and polite smiles on their pale faces.

"The Town Hall!" called Franz to the man in overalls, who had stopped and was hanging out of the driving seat, and soon after the lorry drew up at the Town Hall. Kreusat walked along the busy corridor to a committee room, where he received orders to proceed to the Segeroth Barracks to secure the guns and munitions, of which they were still in need. As he went along the passage he lived over again the hours of despair following his arrest. Unconsciously he kept a close look-out for the hateful faces of his captors. His head burnt like fire and his tongue began to pain him again.

"The damned swine beat me up," he thought and gripped his carbine more firmly. Outside a worker passed him a bundle of newspapers. "It's *Spartacus*," he said. "We requisitioned the staff of the *Kleine Anzeiger* and they've got to print our paper now!"

Franz distributed among the men the papers which had been given him, and gave the order to proceed to the Segeroth Barracks. Everywhere the scene was the same. Armed men and women wearing armlets and red scarves—singing—waving to them—and cheering. On all sides detachments of workers were marching and red flags were fluttering.

The barracks were like a military camp, full of motors, guns and groups of armed men laughing and talking. At the entrance to the barracks stood sentries with fixed bayonets. "Where's this lorry from?" one of them asked.

"From Stoppenberg," shouted the dwarf, climbing nimbly down. The others got out also and stood by the lorry. In the meanwhile the sentry had informed the

commandant, a young sailor, of their arrival. " You are going to the front ? " he asked.

" Yes."

" Where is your leader ? "

Franz Kreusat introduced himself. " Come with me comrade," said the sailor. " What do you need ? " he asked on the way.

" We could do with a heavy machine gun," said Franz.

" You can have anything you like except cash," laughed the sailor. " We have plenty of arms and munitions." He called a couple of workers to supply the detachment with anything they needed. " Have you had anything to eat yet ? " he asked.

" Most of them have had nothing," Franz replied.

" Call them ; they can have some grub here. You have hard times in front of you," said the sailor.

Frank Kreusat was astonished to find such good organization in so short a time. The sailor brought him to a hut at the back of which was the kitchen. Six large cauldrons were steaming there and giving out a fresh and delicious smell of savoury beans.

Perspiring, chattering women with aprons and red kerchiefs on their heads were serving out the food to the waiting soldiers, others were washing dishes and peeling potatoes which had been found when the barracks were captured.

" Let them get you some food and set to," said the tar with a smile, and, noting Kreusat's look of surprise : " You are astonished, eh ? " Franz nodded in amazement.

" Commandant wanted on the telephone," a worker shouted from the door.

" You see, that's how it goes on all day long," said the sailor.

He had only just gone when another man came in. " Where is Gerhard ? " he asked.

" He has just been called away," replied one of the women.

"He is on the phone." She turned to the men of Kreusat's section, "He has to keep moving, I can tell you!"

The dwarf drew near the cauldron, raised the cover and sampled its contents like a full-blown culinary inspector. A wooden spoon smacked him in the face. "Now then, you, what do you want there, you scarecrow!" scolded a stout woman; and the other women shouted at him too.

"I wanted to see if there was enough bacon in it," replied the dwarf and licked the gravy from his thin moustache.

"There's enough even for Schnidder," joked the miners.

"Well, I had to see if it was eatable," replied the dwarf in an injured tone. Sure enough, he ate the pork and beans which were put before him with great satisfaction, and made friends with the woman who had smacked his face with the spoon. "Are you married?" he asked after his third helping, and pinched her fat hips, "because I am a widower, you know."

"You eat it up," answered the woman. "Eat and get fat." "I've had three housekeepers," went on the dwarf, "and they all ran away from me. The last one even took the flat-iron with her."

The others laughed at the pair. "Schnidder'll marry two or three more wives before he's done." "But only where he smells bacon." "And he'll be summoned for breach of promise."

They laughed loudly, but the dwarf cared nothing for their jeers and only buried his nose deeper in his bowl, shovelled spoonful after spoonful noisily into his toothless mouth and beckoned confidentially to the stout woman. "Let 'em talk, my girl," he said and smacked his lips with pleasure, "it's only jealousy."

"Will you have another basin full?" she asked, laughing, but he was apparently unable to eat any more. "I think I've had enough, my dear," he said.

"I say," grinned one of the miners, "now what have

you done? We'll never get him into the lorry; he'll bust!"

"With just a couple of spoonfuls!" said the dwarf contemptuously. The women screamed with laughter and held their sides. The dwarf waddled out. "I will go to the commandant and see about further transport—do you understand?" he said to Franz.

"The beans were good," said a man beside Franz. "But to-morrow we'll get blue beans.* And they'll fill our bellies all right."

"Possibly for good and all," agreed the first speaker.

"We have got to deal with the Reichswehr now," said Franz. "The Noskerites are brutes; I learnt that last year in Essen."

"But we are ready for them now, comrade," said a stalwart quiet man who did not belong to Kreusat's contingent.

Since the commandant had not reappeared, Franz chatted with his neighbour. His name was Murr. He did not belong to any contingent with transport, and intended to join the next that came along.

"You can come with us if you like," said Franz, who liked this man for his extraordinary calmness and stolidity.

"If you have room I'd be glad."

"There is still room for one." They shook hands, and Franz told them about his arrest and the beating he had got from the militiamen.

"Yes, comrade, we have a lot to learn yet from the Russian Bolsheviks," said Murr. "They didn't do so much deliberating and negotiating, but let their guns talk and arbitrate."

In the meanwhile the rest of the red army men were discussing the Noskerites. "I only finished with that gang a fortnight ago," said a young worker in a grey military coat and cap. "When we were guarding the frontiers there was some show! The chap who could pinch best

* Bullets.

became lance-corporal. If you could get hold of a good whore for your company commander you became a sergeant-major. When we passed through the towns and sang bawdy songs the bourgeoisie threw flowers at us and wiped tears from their eyes. The workers knew better and spat as we passed."

The miners laughed. "Don't laugh," said the youth. "It all helped ; in a week half the company was disbanded."

The commandant appeared. "Comrades, if you are ready now, you can go on to Dorsten. They have just asked us to send reinforcements there." His face grew stern as he beckoned Franz aside. "It doesn't sound too good there. Some of the troops are refusing to go to the front."

"Why ?" asked Franz in amazement.

"I was not told why." Franz and the sailor looked at one another gravely. Franz simply could not conceive how anyone could refuse to go to the front. The sailor knew better. "They haven't all come with us with the intention of fighting to free the workers, comrade. I see all the contingents, and there have been some which I would rather have kept back and put under lock and key. Every rising is like a heavy stone thrown into a pond ; it often stirs up a lot of mud."

"Sterner discipline is what's needed, comrade," said Murr. "It is better to put a bullet into the worst offenders in good time, before they corrupt hundreds of others. Some of them are paid agents of the bourgeoisie, who only go with us to make our task impossible."

"We shall sort them out carefully from now onwards," said the sailor, and accompanied them out of the hut into the open air. The man in overalls stood before the lorry as if rooted in the ground, his legs wide apart. He was cranking up. On the western horizon the sun was hanging like an immense drop of blood.

CHAPTER IV

THE motor began backfiring and the engine was soon running. "In you get!" ordered Franz. "In with you!" called the Red soldiers to one another and clambered up over the high sides of the lorry.

"Leave room for me, comrades!" said a woman's voice.

"Well I never!" gasped the dwarf. "What's coming now?"

Across the street ran a robust girl with a red kerchief round her head. On her arm was a Red Cross armlet.

"Stop a minute, boys; the nurse wants to come with us," said the dwarf and leant over the side of the lorry. With alacrity he stretched out his short, thin arms to the girl to help her up.

"What can we do for you?" asked Franz in surprise.

"I want to go with you," replied the girl. "You must have someone with you to look after the wounded." She pushed him towards the lorry and said vigorously, "Come on, give me a leg-up!"

Franz hesitated, but she laughed and seized hold of his hands. "Now then, clasp them together and bend down a little." Franz did as she said and placed his clasped hands under her foot. She climbed into the lorry as nimbly as a cat.

Her arrival was greeted with cries of "Hullo!" "Ha, ha!" "What has our Schnidder got now?" "What do you say to that, Schnidder?"

"Get away!" shouted the girl and defended herself from a third man, who had cheeked her.

"Let the girl alone!" said the dwarf.

"Don't put on airs," said one rough youth and tried to caress the nurse. He received a box on the ear.

"My God," said the dwarf in astonishment, "that girl

certainly has plenty of pluck ! ” He drew nearer to her and puffed his chest out. “ If any of the others try any tricks they’ll have to reckon with me ! ”

“ Take care,” joked a miner ; “ he’ll be proposing to you next.”

“ Shut up ! ” replied the dwarf. “ When we get to the firing line this section will need a nurse.”

The nurse was good-looking. They eyed her shapely body appreciatively. When she laughed her full bosom rose and fell ; their hands trembled, and they longed to seize hold of her. Another tried to embrace her. “ Now stop that once and for all ! ” said the girl angrily. She leant out of the lorry and called to Franz Kreusat : “ Here, you ! What sort of a pig-stye’s this ? I shall get out if this doesn’t stop.”

“ Hoho, that won’t do ! ” called the dwarf.

“ Leave her alone, or she’ll get out,” said Franz.

“ Don’t worry, Kreusat, we’re just making friends ; this is only the first impression. . . .” The rest was drowned by the din of the motor. Franz climbed in with Murr. He tried to sit near the nurse to protect her from the familiarities of his companions.

“ So you want to go to the front with us ? ” he asked the girl. She nodded. “ You know that there will be shooting there ? ”

“ Of course I do,” she replied ; “ I’ve been there twice already. We have brought back one convoy of wounded. They’ve already shot two of our women.” The men were silent and pressed closer to hear the nurse’s story.

“ You don’t go under fire with us, do you ? ” asked Franz hesitatingly.

“ Why not ? Of course we go up to the firing line. I’ve heard enough bullets whistling. One went through my scarf.” She raised her head and fumbled with her right hand for the torn place in her kerchief. “ Look here ; another hair’s-breadth and I wouldn’t have made much more noise ! ”

The men looked on her with respect. Franz Kreusat shook his head. "Yes," said the girl with enthusiasm. "Do you think we are only fit to peel potatoes and patch rags?"

All attempts to molest her had ceased. The men had become serious; a reflective frown even furrowed the dwarf's little forehead as he muttered, "Damn it, that girl has guts!"

Franz now began to observe the nurse attentively as she sat quietly beside him, nibbling at a piece of bread. She had delicate yet firm features; in her pale face were two weary grey eyes. Now that she was no longer excited she seemed to collapse from sheer weariness.

"Where used you to work?" asked Franz, who was afraid that she would fall asleep.

"At Scheidt's, in Kettwig. I was in the textile mill."

"Do your parents live there?"

She looked at him mistrustfully and did not reply. After a minute or two she said, "I have no parents any more."

"No?"

She now looked Franz in the face. "What of it? You cannot keep your parents for ever. I had to start earning my living when I was very little."

Franz coloured. He thought of his mother; what would she do if he were as far away from home as this girl?

"During the war I made shells over there." She pointed to Krupp's works, which were slowly disappearing behind them. "Then I worked on munitions. I was twice nearly poisoned and had to go to hospital as black as a coon from making powder. I wanted to get married at once because I had a kid coming. I was like that six months and then had a miscarriage. The baby was saffron colour and the size of a rat."

"And now?"

"I am still alive, but my boy died in the attack on Kemel."

Franz thought of the drum-fire which he had lived through during the attack on a hill in Flanders in April, 1918. Fragments of flesh were blown high on the tree tops by shells. And men lay in shell craters, covered with earth, suffocated and dying, wretched and helpless; every man was crazed with the fear of death and only attempted to save his own miserable life.

"Do you know why things are like that?" asked Franz.

"Do you think I'm a fool? Of course I know. And I hope things'll be better some time. What chance have I had up to now?"

Silently she stretched her small, scarred hands towards him. As he said nothing, she continued: "I can do nothing with these. You can slave and save into the bargain and then get nothing out of it. You can well believe how sick I get of this life."

He did believe her. He felt deep pity for this girl who had told him her troubles as if they had been friends for a long time.

"My mother should know you," said Franz, "but I don't believe she would understand you."

"Why?"

"She holds her hands in front of her face whenever she sees a demonstration. It often worries me. What she really wants is to keep me tied to her apron strings."

The girl laughed heartily. "She is just a mother. You can do nothing with her."

"Yes," he replied, "she's too fond of me."

"Take her as she is; there is nothing else to do." Both were silent and lost in reflection. A shadow crept over the nurse's face, she seemed to grow older, something glowed in her eyes. Then she tried to hide her face and lowered her head.

"What's the matter?" asked Franz.

"Nothing," she replied roughly.

"Nothing?" He raised her face to his.

"Just let me alone."

"What are you thinking about, then?"

"Oh, what you were just saying about your mother. Mine is dead, you know." After a pause she told him her story: "There were seven of us. My father drank. We picked up coal and sold it to the gentry to get something to eat. Mother had consumption, and a miscarriage before she died. The baby just breathed and then went with her into the coffin. Father drank more heavily then, and one day, in delirium, he hanged himself. And we kids—well, you can guess how children in a position like ours would get on. We were kicked from pillar to post. . . ."

The lorry raced down the valley at top speed. The men in it fell on the top of one another like a load of sheaves when the driver applied the brakes. On each side of them grey and dingy rows of houses, collieries and slag heaps seemed to fly past. Children screamed and waved after the rattling vehicle. Surly, suspicious faces could be seen at the windows of the tenements, morose and soured like their surroundings. Here and there a thin hand waved a greeting.

The air reeked of coal and oil. The men, who had now become silent, felt the whirling dust gritting between their teeth. A layer of foul dust settled on their faces and clung to their eyebrows and beards. They seemed to grow older, more serious, more stern.

A GAIN a colliery plant hove into sight. A rail track crossed the paved street and passed between two trees which had been left there as boundaries, skirting a dyke into the country. An engine was shunting empty trucks ; men in overalls with oil-begrimed hands sprang between the trucks and uncoupled them. This was a dangerous game ; one slip of the foot and the train would crush them to jelly.

To the left of the street lay the colliery yard, full of scrap iron, pit timber in stacks and old coal trucks which were waiting for the repair shops. In the west the sun was falling like a ball into the darkness. The horizon was splashed with colour like a painter's palette as the light finally faded. A cold, frosty wind nipped their faces.

"We must fill up with petrol," shouted the man in overalls and leapt from his seat. The others also climbed down and tried to loosen their cramped limbs by swinging their arms and running round the lorry at a brisk trot.

"You're freezing ; you haven't enough on," said Franz to the nurse, who shrugged her shoulders, shivering.

"I have stuck it for two nights," she replied ; "I ought to be getting used to it." She tried to make a joke of it, but could not help her teeth chattering a little. Franz took off his overcoat. "Come, put this on ; otherwise you'll get ill."

She obeyed him willingly and slipped into the coat. "But now you'll freeze," she said anxiously.

"I, too, managed to stick it before," Franz replied.

Meanwhile the driver had gone away with some men to

get petrol. After about ten minutes he reappeared with a tin in his hand, from which he filled the petrol tank.

"Where did you get that from?" asked Franz.

"Over there, from the pit," grinned the man. "The stores manager was a bit rough at first, but after we let him smell a gun we got plenty of petrol. No one ever served me quicker. Wasn't that so?" he nodded to his companion.

In the meanwhile night came on. Here and there street lamps twinkled. In the houses also oil lamps smoked, and gas jets and electric lights were lit. Having filled the tank, the driver started the engine. "All aboard!" he shouted and got into his seat. Franz helped the nurse into the lorry.

The miners were getting some fun out of the dwarf, who was snoring, huddled up in a corner of the lorry. "Sleep well," said one in tones of deep emotion. "Schnidder will sleep out the attack. Peace to his ashes!" Laughter followed. "What shall we put on his tombstone if he doesn't rise again?" "Here lies our Schnidder. In the next rising he will still lie!" The dwarf laughed unconsciously in his sleep. On his thin lips and thinner moustache hovered a roguish smile. "He is chatting with the angels," said an onlooker in an affected voice.

"Or his friend in the kitchen, who has given him a second helping of beans and bacon!" Franz and the nurse laughed heartily with the others. The dwarf had forgotten all the stormy days before the beans and bacon and his journey to the front, and was snoring with a noise like a circular saw. He slept on, tossed up and down like a sack at every jolt of the lorry.

A van filled with wounded met them. The two vehicles drew up. "Well, how are things at the front?"

"Not too good, comrades; too few reserves. You can't fight without men."

"Where are our fellows?"

"At Dinslaken, in the Wesel Woods and thereabouts."

"Have you lost many?"

"Yes, we've been badly cut up; the Noskerites have used heavy guns and shrapnel."

"Where is the nearest H.Q.?" asked Franz.

"You're almost at Dorsten. Stop in the main street and you'll see some of our sentries."

"Well, we'll get on. So long, comrades!"

"So long!" The cars raced on, one carrying men with blood-stained bandages, groaning with pain, the other soldiers ready for battle, rushing to fill the empty ranks.

The news they had had from the wounded was not of a nature calculated to create a cheerful atmosphere. One after another they ceased talking. Silently they stared into the night, while every now and then the grey shadow of a peasant's cottage or a glimmering light sprang into sight and vanished.

"Let's sing something," said someone hoarsely. "We're in enemy country," a deep voice replied, and this short conversation also languished. Nothing could be heard but the rattle and splutter of the engine. The trees on each side of the road sped past like arrows, flocks of terrified rooks rose screaming and circled round the tree-tops, only to settle again with loud cawing. "Hello! hello!" A small car flashed by, a hand waved a greeting and vanished into the darkness.

The nurse had fallen asleep, leaning on Franz. At intervals she woke in terror when the lorry bumped over a stone.

The dwarf woke up. "O—ooh!" he yawned, opening his mouth wide and showing a few stumps of teeth.

"What's happening, where are we now?"

"We wanted to bury you at Dorsten, Schnidder. We were afraid the beans and bacon had finished you."

"Better too much than too little," replied the dwarf promptly, and blinked as he looked round him. Then, like the others, he stared into the darkness, keeping his rifle ready. "It won't do to doze off, boys; the peasants might try to mess up the car."

"Halt!" An armed worker-sentry stood in the middle of the street and waved a small flag. The lorry groaned as the driver applied the brakes.

"What is it?"

"Where are you from?" asked the sentry.

"From Essen. Where are we?"

"In Dorsten."

"Where is the commandant?"

"Are you the leader? Then come with me." Franz climbed down from the lorry and followed the sentry to an inn.

"Don't be alarmed, comrade, if there's a lot of noise," said the sentry. "A detachment from Essen!" he shouted into a room where a crowd of people were quarrelling violently. "Do you hear?—a detachment has arrived."

The sentry shouted above the din, and presently someone noticed them. A sailor with red eyelids and dirty clothing came forward. "Where have you come from?" he asked in a hoarse, weary voice.

"From Essen," replied Franz.

The sailor stepped nearer and took Franz, who was looking doubtfully at him, by the arm. "Come, comrade. You'll be driven crazy here; it's been going on for days like this. The Social Democrats were co-operating with us—but, my God, how! They've been making things as difficult for us as they can, and now they want to negotiate with the Government again!" He passed his dirty hands over his straggling, tangled hair. "If I had my way some of them would be hanging from the poplars over there."

CHAPTER VI

THEY went into another room. The billiard table, whose green cloth hung in tatters, was piled with crockery, a machine gun and a miscellaneous collection of other things. Franz frowned at the sight of such disorder. The tar noticed this and began to make excuses. "It'll soon be very different, comrade. The most important thing is that we do something outside. Just now we have no time to spend on washing up crockery. We shall have to harness the spouters for those jobs ; that's all they're fit for.

"You'll see a bit more mess yet, my friend," the sailor continued. "But we'll enforce discipline in the long run ; be sure of that."

"What's going to be done with our detachment ?" asked Franz, to cut short these reflections.

"We will billet you for to-night so that you can have a rest and be ready to attack to-morrow."

"Where is the sector we're to take ?"

"Sector ?" The sailor was at a loss. "You must find that out for yourselves, somewhere near Wesel. We are only the intermediate command here. The actual fighting headquarters is further on."

Franz was disappointed. He thought it strange that these here should know nothing precise as to the position of the scene of operations. "This place seems to be very badly organized," he thought.

"Bring your people here and they can have something to eat. Afterwards I'll find you billets," said the sailor.

In the mess-room Franz saw faces that he would not have tolerated in his detachment ; and the talk was very rough. Obscene jokes were bandied about, interspersed by hoarse

laughter from the men and the giggles of the women, who were as noisy as the men.

"When are you going on to the front?" asked the commandant sharply.

"When we want to, friend," said one of the girls and blew smoke insolently in his face.

"You clear out of here to the front or anywhere else, or we'll clean up this place once and for all."

"Scratch my bum, there's shooting going on!" shouted one of the crowd.

"What can we do with them?" said the sailor peevishly, "Do you think that lot are with us because they are class-conscious?"

"How did they get here?" asked Franz.

"How indeed? They are from the detachments which have been sent to us. They're a bunch of swabs who only snuffle round here making trouble and pinching everything they can lay hands on."

Murr got up and came over to the sailor. "You should disarm these ruffians. The Russians would have put them up against the wall long ago. Don't let them hang about here any longer. Come on, we'll help you."

Franz nodded agreement. "Disarm them; the ring-leaders at least." Jokes were flying about among his neighbours. He stood up and shouted: "You ought to be ashamed of yourselves."

"What's he want?" screeched one of the women.
"Have you got something to say?"

"Yes, I have. You should be at the front and not kicking up a row like this."

"Ho, ho!" "Hold your jaw!" "What does the swine want?" "Lights out!" "Knives out!" "Chuck a plate at his head!"

A tumult arose. "Franz, stay here!" screamed Rosa, the nurse, and tried to hold him back. But he was already in the thick of the crowd. With a grip of iron he seized the loudest shouter by his shirt and dragged him to the centre

of the room. "What do you want?" He shook this astonished man from side to side with the strength of a madman, and then dealt him a blow in the face with his fist. "You'll cheek me, will you, you mongrel?" he shouted. The man fell to the floor like a log.

"Don't let anyone get out, boys," Franz shouted to his own companions who surrounded him; then: "Come on. Give up your guns!" he called to the rest who, thoroughly cowed, were trying to squeeze into a corner.

One after another they laid their weapons on the table. "We were only having a bit of fun," said one of them.

"A damned sort of 'fun' that, while the comrades at the front are dying. You ought to be ashamed of yourselves," answered Franz. The sailor had watched the scene with satisfaction. Now he came forward. "If you have not cleared out lock, stock and barrel, in five minutes, I'll put anyone we catch up against the wall."

The threat had its effect. Four or five men left the room. The rest stayed behind and apologized. They were young lads who had come under the influence of the roughs through stupidity, and only needed strong leadership. There were over thirty of them.

"What shall we do with this lot?" pondered the sailor. He scanned them doubtfully, one after another.

"Get hold of a lorry; we'll take them with us to the front," said Franz Kreusat. He seized on one of the men who seemed to him the most reliable and said: "Will you be responsible for these men? Can we rely on you?"

"I'll bring them along," said the man.

The sailor gave him his hand on it. "We trust you," he said, "and don't you others be such chumps again. We have just about enough work and bother on our hands."

The women were very quiet. They had watched the struggle anxiously. When the new detachment went out in marching order, one of the women came forward and asked shyly: "And we? What shall we do?"

"You stay here till the Executive Council decides what's

to be done with you," replied the sailor. They grumbled at first, but soon resigned themselves, and even asked if they might tidy the room.

The two lorries raced through the night. Franz Kreusat's section had a guide with them. After a quarter of an hour's journey the guide made them stop. He pointed to an inn with darkened windows. " You're to be billeted here. If the landlord makes any fuss just tell him that it's the orders of the Executive Council."

" But, my God, how can I put up so many people ? " whined the landlord. The landlady was less polite and shouted : " My inn isn't an asylum for tramps. I shall lodge a complaint to-morrow."

" It's no use, woman. No complaints are any use with these people," said her husband, and looked on with a sour face while the red army men prepared their beds in the inn parlour. Straw was taken from a neighbouring barn and spread on the floor.

" Haven't you a separate room for a woman ? " Franz asked the landlady, who was sitting sulkily in a corner behind the counter, guarding the till and the drinks.

" No."

" You haven't ! " returned Franz angrily. Behind the bar lay a small club-room. He took in a bundle of straw to make a bed for the nurse, while the landlady grumbled : " Are you going to dirty my whole house ? A nice mess you're making ! "

" It's all right for you if it's all right for us ! " said Franz indignantly. " We can't sleep outside."

" Why are you doing it then ? "

" Doing what ? " said Franz.

" Making people discontented. Only lunatics would do what you're doing." Franz had no desire to quarrel with the woman. Also he did not really know what to say to her. " Go to sleep, there's no use talking about it now," he answered.

" Yes, go to sleep ; that would just suit you ! " She was

anxious about her wares and her eyes blazed with hatred. "And if I have to sit behind the counter like this for a whole week, I won't leave this inn," she answered venomously, and left the room."

"What a temper she's in!" laughed Rosa.

"Now you lie down and go to sleep." Franz pointed to the bed of straw. "I want to sleep too. Good night." He held out his hand. She hesitated and he drew it back somewhat brusquely and went out.

It was almost midnight. The dwarf was snoring loudly again. Some of the others were also asleep. Slowly the conversation of the tired men died away.

Franz flung himself down on the straw, but sleep, which had overpowered all the others, would not come to him. Behind the counter the landlady cleared her throat; she had stayed to watch over her wretched property. She sat huddled in her chair and swayed to and fro in a doze.

The bar-room was full of dense evil-smelling fumes from the smoking oil lamp.

Murr came in and waked the relief. The worker got up, yawned, took his gun and went out. Murr looked over to Franz and saw that he was still awake. He went over and stretched himself beside him. "They're using heavy artillery against us," he said as he lay down. "Wounded have come in and say we've lost a lot of men."

"We must have the same weapons as the Reichswehr," said Franz.

"Then we must take them from the Noskerites," replied Murr.

"The Noskerites won't give us anything."

"No, it's up to us to get them," said Murr. "Up to now it has gone all right. When we have captured Wesel things will be better. There we shall get the field-guns."

They chatted for a while and then Murr went to sleep. Soon Franz Kreusat followed his example. From the front, through the stillness of the night, came the ominous sound of the bombardment—they were attacking the railway.

CHAPTER VII

"**W**AKE up!" Franz heard someone call, and opened his eyes. One of the workers put up the shutters and opened the window.

"Wake up!" Another worker woke the rest.

"Coffee-makers on duty!" roared the dwarf in the tones of a sergeant. "Where is that girl? She ought to make the coffee." He knocked on the door with his bony knuckles. "Will you be up soon?"

"Hold your tongue, Schnidder," called Rosa from the room. Then she came out and looked for Franz. "Another night over!" she smiled as she found him.

"We shan't be in such comfortable quarters to-morrow," said Franz. She glanced apprehensively at him.

"I shall stay with your outfit, shan't I?" she asked anxiously.

"I don't know whether we shall dare take you with us this time," replied Franz.

"Why not?" she asked in dismay. "I wasn't afraid to go with them before."

"You might get hurt."

"And you won't get hurt! Don't be stupid," she said fearlessly. They looked into each other's eyes.

"Yes, I'm worried about you," said Franz. "It is no place for women."

"I will go with you," said Rosa firmly. "I'm not afraid of bullets." She caught hold of his hand again. "You'll take me with you, won't you, Franz?"

"I daren't decide that alone," replied Franz.

"I *will* go with you!" she stood before him defiantly, like a child. Just then Murr came in.

" You can wash outside at the pump," he said to Kreusat. He thrust a piece of soap and a small towel into Franz's hands and pushed him out. " Buck up, we shall probably have to start soon."

Behind the counter the landlady got up. Sourly she watched the workers going to and fro. Rosa approached her and asked : " Can we have some hot water ? "

The landlady growled something and called her husband, " They want hot water. What do you want it for ? " she asked Rosa.

" To make coffee," answered the girl.

" Have you got any coffee ? " asked the landlady in a rather more friendly tone. Rosa smiled as she replied in confusion : " I really don't know. She turned to Murr, who was unfastening his knapsack. " Have you got any ? "

" I brought some with me," said Murr as he drew a small brown package from his knapsack and handed it to the nurse. The landlord went into the kitchen behind the bar, and the landlady said, nodding her head in his direction, " You can boil yourself some water."

Rosa followed the surly landlord. A little later she returned with a steaming kettle. Straightway there spread through the bar the delicious odour of freshly-made coffee, which made the men, who were getting into their clothes, sniff eagerly.

When Franz came back from washing the straw had been pushed on one side and the floor swept and two tables had been placed in the centre of the room. " Come and have a cup of coffee ! " Rosa called to him. Franz sat beside Murr and drank. He made no preparations for eating, so Murr asked him, " Aren't you hungry, Franz ? "

" I've brought nothing with me," said Franz hesitatingly. " Yesterday evening, in that row at Dorsten, I didn't think to put anything together." Murr cut a slice from his loaf, divided his piece of smoked bacon and handed it to Kreusat. " Here, have a bit of mine," he said.

The sunlight coming through the window gave the

smoky room a brighter appearance. The workers became more cheerful. The dwarf was particularly influenced by this atmosphere ; he infected them all with his gaiety.

From the front could be heard the dull thud of exploding shells. The men heard it and their talk grew more serious.

"Those are heavies," said an ex-artilleryman. "It's a shame that we haven't things like that ; they'd stir up some dust ! "

"It must have been grand to have been in the war," said a fair-haired youth, a haulier, who had never had a gun in his hands before the Stoppenberg rising.

"Grand !" said Murr. "All war is vile and bloody and terrible ; the only thing that matters is the cause you fight for." The men turned towards the speaker. He continued : "When the workers allow themselves to be driven into the trenches for a small clique of capitalist exploiters and bayonet the men in the opposite trenches, then it is a financiers' war and the workers die for nothing."

"But there's war on now !" shouted the haulier across the table.

"This time it's another sort of war ; a war of class against class, of the oppressed against their oppressors. We are fighting now for the freedom of the workers. This is a more terrible but a juster war, comrade."

"And shall we ever have peace ?" asked a tramway worker who till now had sat there in silence.

"Not until the workers of all countries unite, rise, seize arms, drive the bosses to hell and give power to the workers."

"When ?" said the tramwayman doubtfully.

Murr looked sternly at him. "The Russian workers and peasants did not ask 'When ?' They stood together, clenched their teeth and let their guns decide. You can't succeed without confidence. We can't make useless sacrifices ; otherwise it would be better to stay in the factories and wait for charity, or till the machines make an end of us ! Comrades, we have gained nothing from our lives of slavery except hatred of the present system, which

makes slaves of us and scarcely lets us earn our daily bread. What brings us out is the will to make an end of this system and fight for a juster one."

The workers looked shyly, almost respectfully, at Murr. His usually pale face had flushed during his impassioned speech and the sunlight had transfigured him. His eyes flashed, full of inexorable hatred. "That is why our struggle is a just one, comrades," he continued after a pause. "The workers who fall in this fight are heroes . . . we are fighting for Freedom and Justice."

"So our war *is* right, then?" said the fair-haired haulier.

Murr looked over at the enthusiastic youth. "Yes, our war is just, and justice is good. Justice will give us a new life and free thoughts. We shall become what we could not have been called before, in the times of our slavery—human." He stood up and stretched himself; under his coat the powerful muscles contracted. He laughed gaily. "The sun is infectious, comrades," he ended.

The men rose one after another from the table, formed groups and discussed what Murr had said.

There was a sudden noise outside, and the men ran out to see what was happening. Before the inn stood a lorry full of armed workers.

"Hullo!" "Where have you come from?" There was an immediate fire of questions. "From Gelsenkirchen. And you?" "From Essen." "From Stoppenberg." "Is it far to the front?" "We're going up for the first time too." "Are more detachments coming?" "Sure, masses of them. Mobilization is going full steam, comrades." "Good!"

The men climbed down from the lorry. Big hands were clasped in greeting. Old and young, hewers, hauliers, metal and textile workers, some in uniform, they formed a motley crew. Beyond them, at the front, heavy explosions sounded at intervals. Their comrades were there, waiting for relief.

A cyclist came up and told them to get ready.

"Put your things together," said Franz Kreusat to his men. The driver of their lorry started his engine.

"All aboard!" called the leader of the other section. After hearty handshakes the men swung themselves into the truck.

"Are you in, boys?" shouted Kreusat's men.

"All serene!" came the reply.

"Off we go!" The engine roared. The Gelsenkirchen men rushed past; two other lorries thundered up from the Dorsten direction and raced after the first.

"Up you get!" cried Kreusat.

They clambered quickly into the lorry, Rosa, Murr and Franz Kreusat last of all. "Ready?" asked the driver; he hooted to show that they were starting, and the lorry jerked forward and sped after the others.

CHAPTER VIII

IN a quarter of an hour they overtook the others, and Franz ordered a halt. A sentry stepped forward and beckoned to them.

"What's up?"

"You must get out here and go on on foot. Their artillery is shelling the road," said the sentry. The men got out at Franz's command and stood about in groups.

"Where shall we find the way to our sector?" asked Franz.

"You must find out at H.Q. up ahead."

"Come on," said Franz, and the men loaded themselves with arms and machine-gun ammunition. After half an hour a few isolated houses came into view. They met a small party of men returning from the scene of action.

"Tired, eh?" Kreusat's contingent asked them.

"Things are pretty thick up there," was the reply. One of them stopped and said, "There are some bastards up there who are wolfing all the bread rations and then refusing to go into the line; go and put hell into them."

"What again?" asked the dwarf and unwrapped his gun from the folds of his coat.

"There are only a handful of them, but they send the rest crazy too."

"How far off are we?" asked Franz.

"About ten minutes' walk."

In about fifteen minutes they came to trenches from which a great deal of noise was coming. Franz called a halt and, going up to the nearest, asked for the commandant.

"If you mean the bloke inside there, then you'll find

him inside," answered a boy. He spoke in a jeering tone, and a burst of laughter followed.

Franz looked at the men. All the disturbance came from a few roughs.

"Just like Dorsten!" he thought, and the memory of the previous evening came back to him. He beckoned to Murr. "I say, something's wrong here. Tell the men to keep their guns by them, and I'll go in and make inquiries."

He went into a house. Here also quarrelling was going on. Amid a tremendous noise a few workers were giving out bread rations. "Who hasn't had any?" "Here!" "Here!" Franz noticed some hiding their rations and then pressing forward for more.

"Swallow it all then!" said an emaciated worker angrily, who had rushed forward from one of the groups without obtaining any. "I come from the front and can't get anything to eat, but those swabs who've been hanging round here since yesterday can't cram their guts full enough! God damn them!"

"Where is the commandant?" asked Franz of this man.

"He doesn't worry himself about it at all. He sits in the room there and marks his maps, and that's all," said the worker bitterly.

"Don't talk like that," said another. "The fellow must be driven mad by this business."

Franz pushed his way through to the commandant's room and opened the door. A man was sitting over a table on which lay a map. Apparently he did not hear anyone come in. As soon as Franz addressed him he drew himself up and regarded him indignantly, saying, "I've just given orders that no one was to disturb me."

"I've come with a contingent."

"Where from?"

"From Essen."

"Can you trust your men? Otherwise there's no point in coming. Believe me, we've just about had enough of

it." The man stood up wearily and looked doubtfully at Franz. "Have you seen those fellows outside? They worry me the whole time. They are always wanting rations, but you won't get them to the front unless you shoot a few of 'em."

"There are only a few defeatists among them," said Franz.

"Just catch those few," said the commander morosely.

"I'll certainly try and help you. We'll bring them to their senses," said Franz with confidence. They talked it over, and when Franz called in Murr and the leaders of the fresh contingents the commandant decided to take action.

The leaders left the building and went to their contingents. After a short explanation they placed their men in line across the street and barred the way to the house.

The men in the trenches became uneasy. "What's the game?" shouted out one of the noisiest.

The commandant went over to him. "Give me your gun; sharp now!"

"What for?"

"Hand it over," said the commandant sternly; the man was cowed and gave up his gun. The commandant went from one group to another and repeated the procedure. The roughs tried to make off, but were disarmed one after another. Half a dozen were put under guard near the house; the rest stood up, expecting the same treatment.

"You swabs!" said the commandant. "At the front they are waiting for reinforcements, and you are hanging round here!" He spoke with the leaders for a moment and then turned again to the workers. "Now then, form up in your local sections. Anyone refusing to go to the front is to surrender his gun."

A dozen or more gave up their arms. The others formed up. The commandant selected the most reliable and gave them charge of sections.

"Now then, forward march!" he ordered, after seeing that those who had no bread had been supplied.

When the men went off the nurses wanted to go with them, but the commandant ordered them to remain, as they were going to establish a dressing station. Rosa, who still cherished hopes of going to the front, grew pale. She gazed at Franz, who had joined his company. Her head sank and she sat down in a trench and began to unfasten packets of lint.

"You are to reinforce the troops to the left of the railway," said the commandant to Kreusat; "they must be somewhere in the wood."

Kreusat's contingent got a guide who knew the locality. Franz looked round for Rosa and called her to him. She got up and came nearer. "You'll be better here, Rosa," he said and raised her head.

"I'd much rather go with you."

"It won't do. You can see it won't."

They shook hands. "Come back safe," she said.

"Hope so," he replied and gave the signal to start. The contingent marched off with two machine-gun crews at the head. When they had started off down the straight country road Rosa still stood there, leaning against a tree, and gazed after the men till they disappeared round a bend in the road which led to the wood.

CHAPTER IX

KREUSAT'S contingent, leaving the road, turned sharply into the wood. They crossed the railway and were forced frequently to drop to the ground, as a heavy shell howled over their heads every few minutes and buried itself in the earth behind them. Franz ordered them to deploy, but took some trustworthy men on in front with him. They advanced with great caution.

After half an hour Kreusat gave the signal to halt. They stood before newly-dug trenches deep enough to conceal men, but they were apparently abandoned.

"Our men have been here. I'm sure of that," said the guide, with a puzzled expression.

"Perhaps they have gone on ahead," suggested Franz, and looked round for footmarks.

The guide shook his head. "Perhaps they were surprised. They were very few and they had no proper line of communications."

They stood there undecided, talked the situation over and carefully searched the thickets to right and left. "We can't stand here for ever," said Franz.

"What do you suggest doing, then?" asked the guide. "You can't go blindly forward either."

"We must try and make contact with our own men or catch the Noskerites," said Franz firmly, and was just about to give the sign to advance when, close on their left, first at short intervals and then more rapidly, a machine gun began to rattle.

"There they are," said the guide.

"Hush!" ordered Franz. "We must have a look first and see what's up." He took Murr and the guide with

him and crept forward in the direction of the shooting. The fire grew stronger as they neared the scene of action.

"The Noskerites have surprised a detachment of our men at least," whispered the guide. "And this is not the first time. The men in the firing line are exhausted, and so few reinforcements have come up that we have lost nearly all our lines of communication. That's why the Noskerites have been able to take our sections by surprise."

Franz Kreusat waited for the rest of the section, and told them to get down and crawl forward. The dwarf was quite beside himself and saw ghosts everywhere. He had fixed a bayonet on his rifle, and stabbed every bush with it in his anxiety to be cautious.

"Stop that nonsense," a metal-worker warned him; "you'll be sticking one of us!"

"Do you want to fall into a trap, you ass?" said the dwarf. "I know very well what I'm doing."

After advancing about a hundred yards Franz Kreusat, who was crawling in front of Murr and the guide, saw a castle rising from a dip in the valley. At the same minute shots tore through the trees. They ducked down into a hollow and tried to guess what was going on round the building.

"There are the Noskerites!" The guide waved his hand in the direction of the courtyard of the building, where men in uniform were running. "They are the greencoats," said Murr. "The greencoats and Reichswehr," agreed the guide. Franz Kreusat told them to keep a look out and crawled back and brought up the rest of the section. Then he ordered them to bring the two machine guns into position.

"Look, there are more Noskerites coming out of the thicket," whispered Murr. "See that they get what's coming to them."

"All get into position!" Franz whispered loudly. "Are you ready? The machine guns are to cover the yard. Ready? Rapid fire!" Rrrr, tack, tack, tack, rrrr! In a few minutes all their guns were in action and the yard

and the places where the greencoats had taken cover were swept with bullets. The ex-militiaman and the ex-gunner lay behind the light gun, and Kreusat and Murr behind the heavy one.

The surprise attack was successful. The soldiers ran in wild confusion across the yard, rushed to the gate and vanished into the thicket. Kreusat ordered his men to fire into the thicket, since he guessed that they would make a stand there. He himself directed his fire into every suspicious spot in the courtyard. On their left, too, machine guns rattled.

"Go and see what's happening there," said Franz to Murr, and called to a worker who was lying nearby to crawl up and give him the cartridges. Murr raised himself and worked his way to the left towards the thicket. He came back after a few minutes and said, "There's a river over there, and I saw our people on the other bank."

"A river?" queried the guide, who was lying near Franz. "Then it must be the Lippe. The Hamborn men are behind the Lippe."

"Where are the chaps who were here?" asked Franz anxiously. "Yes—where?" The guide grew pale. "Taken by surprise and killed? What else can have happened to them?"

Franz raised himself to a kneeling position and looked over to the building in front of them. "The Noskerites have cleared out, comrades. We must go in!"

"You'll go into the building?" said the guide in alarm. "If we wait the Noskerites will come back, and we shan't get it so easily a second time."

"They'll be able to catch us all in there like rats in a trap."

Franz had formed his plan and was not to be put off. He intended to try to get into touch with the workers on the other side of the river and join up with them as soon as they were in the building. "The guns must remain in position for the present, and fire at once if the Noskerites

show themselves," he decided. "The rest of you follow in open formation but ready to fire. Come on!"

He waved his hand and ran forward, as before, from cover to cover. Murr remained near him and watched the windows of the white-washed building. The men followed with tense faces, their hands shaking with excitement. When they had advanced to within about fifty yards of the building Franz gave the command "Double!"

Now things moved fast. The gate was spattered with bullets and half torn from its hinges. "In you go and search thoroughly. Three of you search the thicket."

The workers scattered and searched the courtyard. Cartridge cases, ammunition and hand grenades were discovered in abundance; here and there, especially where they found disabled machine guns, were pools of blood; but no trace of dead or wounded.

The guide warned, "Take care, this is a trap. Where are the dead and wounded? They have not brought them out. We should have seen that clear enough."

Murr pointed to a small open gate which was half hidden in the outer wall. "They were taken out through there."

The men, whom the guide's words had rendered uneasy, sighed with relief. Murr, one of the calmest of them, was the first to prove that all was well. He then took his pocket knife and climbed up on a pile of wood to cut the telephone wire. "It is safest," he said to Franz. "Such innocent-looking things are often very dangerous."

"Go into the house and search too," said Kreusat to the waiting men, and some set off at once. On the broad steps appeared a gaunt civilian. He said, with a wry smile, "There is no one in the castle; the soldiers have left, gentlemen."

"Who are you?" asked Franz Kreusat, approaching the civilian.

"I am the steward," he explained, revealing a gleaming row of gold teeth as he spoke.

"Get us something to eat," said Franz. "But I advise

you not to try to get in touch with the Noskerites, or you'll be put against the wall."

"I shall be very glad to have nothing to do with anyone, gentlemen," answered the man. "Believe me, it's not very pleasant to be cross-examined every minute."

"I'll watch and see that he doesn't do anything foolish," said the dwarf, and with fixed bayonet followed the steward into the castle. After a while out came the steward and two timid maidservants, with the dwarf behind them. The maids were carrying crockery, bread, butter and a big can of milk. Quickly the tables were brought into the yard and the workers fell hungrily on the food.

"Listen," whispered the dwarf in Franz's ear. "I tell you that chap is no steward; he is the fellow himself, the count or baron or whatever he doesn't call himself."

Kreusat looked more closely at the steward. He called Murr and said, "I say, Schnidder thinks that that fellow is the owner himself. Wouldn't it be better to lock him up? The cur may play us a trick; we don't know his little ways."

"Yes, shut him up," said Murr, and quietly went on eating. Franz took two men and went up to the steward, who looked at him uncertainly and said, "Anything more I can do for you?"

"No," said Franz. "But I strongly imagine that you haven't told us the truth about yourself. We shall have to put you under arrest before you do us any harm."

"I do you any harm!" The civilian became indignant. "I've no wish to mix myself up with your business."

"No," interrupted the dwarf. "But it is better to lock you up." He spoke High German, which he seldom used, and his face looked no more friendly as he continued: "Where are our people, who were here before us? You won't persuade me that you don't know what has happened to them."

The civilian went white. "I . . . really don't know," he stammered. Franz conceived a strong suspicion that

the alleged steward had had a finger in the attack on the section which had disappeared. He signed to the two soldiers. "Place him under arrest and guard him."

The civilian had to submit. Kreusat noticed the expression on his face ; it was one of anxiety and deadly hatred.

"Who will cross the Lippe and try to get contact with our chaps on the other side ?" asked Kreusat as he returned to his men. Murr stood up and chose two men. "Come with me," he said briefly.

When Murr was gone Franz divided up his contingent. Half remained in the castle with orders to post double sentries in the thicket at once. The two machine guns were placed in covered positions so as to be ready for action in the event of a fresh attack by the Reichswehr. A third machine gun, which they had found behind a pile of wood, still in serviceable condition, Franz took with him. He ordered the other half of the contingent to accompany him and plunged into the wood to the right. By this manœuvre he intended to push forward as far as the railway embankment. The dwarf, too, was with this section ; he had got tired of staying in the castle after the steward had been arrested. For a quarter of an hour or more they crept cautiously through the undergrowth, but did not sight the railway embankment. Franz called a halt and they stood still where the paths in the wood crossed.

"We must find out where we are now or we'll run into the jaws of the Noskerites," he said. He posted a couple of sentries, found a good position for the machine gun, and then took the rest of the section on with him to reconnoitre.

CHAPTER X

THE further they went the more anxious Franz Kreusat became. "Where are we now?" he asked at last, and stood still in bewilderment.

"Heaven only knows," growled an old metal-worker. "The Noskerites seem to have gone clean off somewhere, or else we're running round between the two lines."

"But if that were so there would be firing," Franz argued. "The whole line from the railway to the Lippe seems to have been swept clean." He was still deliberating when the dwarf, who was crawling through the bushes on the left of the party, made a hoarse exclamation. The men rushed and found him grey in the face and trembling in every limb. He pointed to a tree. "There!" he gasped. Bound to the tree was hanging a man in worker's clothing, with his skull smashed in and the brains oozing from it. His face was unrecognizable and was covered with blood.

The men gasped. "Hounds, the damned hounds!" snarled Franz, who felt sick at the sight. The old metal-worker cut the cord which held the body, and a couple of men came forward and carried the dead man into the bushes. The old man unfastened the spade he was carrying and began to cover the corpse with earth. Franz overcame his nausea and helped him.

"What shall we do now?" asked the men apprehensively. The sight of the mangled corpse heightened their feeling of danger and they urged a return.

"That won't do, comrades," said Franz Kreusat. "We must stay here, post sentries and then send back a report asking for reinforcements before night."

While they were talking it over Murr arrived. Franz told him about the dead man. "Which do you think best, to stay here or go back?" asked Franz.

"We must stay here and post sentries. Who can guarantee we shan't run into still greater danger on the way back?" said Murr. He offered to go back to the castle and urge the men there to keep a sharp look-out. "The Hamborn men are on the other bank of the river," Murr told them briefly. "They saw the Noskerites make a surprise attack on the castle, which was certainly held by our people. They at once opened fire, which was answered by the Reichswehr until we came along and surprised the gang. We're protected on the left by their fire." He started off at a rapid pace. Franz Kreusat looked for suitable positions and posted his sentries.

In a tongue of woodland overlooking some two hundred yards of open ground he posted the dwarf and the metal-worker with instructions to raise the alarm as soon as they caught sight of any uniformed men. Then he went swiftly from sentry to sentry, pointed out their danger, and emphasized the need for watchfulness. In this way he reached the castle where Murr had already taken all necessary measures for its defence.

A tramway worker, who was an ex-soldier and had soon grasped the position, undertook command of the left wing. Murr returned with Franz. They passed the sentries, advanced through the woodlands and endeavoured, by crawling a hundred yards further, to ascertain the position of the Reichswehr sentries. From time to time shots rang out.

"What shall we do when it gets dark?" asked Kreusat, exhausted by his feverish activity. They were standing where the paths crossed and where the two machine guns were concealed.

"We must see that we get reinforcements," replied Murr. "How?" "One of us must go back." Franz Kreusat stood there and seemed to be losing heart. "Do you think

we can do it now? We must also look round for shelter for the men who are off duty."

"Let's go there!" Murr pointed to a peasant's cottage.
"The people there must find room for them."

They went up to the little house, and Franz rapped on the door. A surly-faced man appeared. "What do you want?" he asked.

"Give us a room for a few men," said Kreusat.

"I have no room to spare!" The door closed.

Kreusat got angry. "Open!" he shouted and hammered on the door with the butt of his carbine. The peasant opened it again and grumbled: "What do you want now? I have no room."

"If you don't give us a room willingly, we'll commandeer it." Murr also threatened him now.

"The devil take you," swore the peasant, but he opened the door wide now and came out. "First come the Reichswehr and then you, and then the Reichswehr again, and so it goes on."

"We must have shelter," said Kreusat more gently.
"Our men can't stay out in the cold all night."

The peasant looked sullenly from one to the other. "And what if the same thing happens to me as last time," he said. "The fellows pinched half a dozen of my hens."

"You needn't be afraid of that with us," Franz assured him. "The Reichswehr said that too, but they pinched them just the same," was the reply.

"We are not all tarred with the same brush," said Murr, joining in the argument. "If you'd seen some of the other things the Reichswehr have done, then you'd know that they'd stick at nothing."

"None of you are good for anything," said the peasant sulkily. Murr told him about the dead man whom they had found in the wood. The peasant listened.

"I found one too," he said. "Come and look!"

Murr and Kreusat looked at one another in dismay and followed the peasant. Fifty paces deeper into the wood he

stopped and stirred a heap of leaves with his wooden shoe. A corpse was disclosed. It was that of a worker; his head was smashed in by a rifle butt like that of the other.

The peasant spat the words out at them as he turned away: "Do you know that never while I was on active service did I come across men behaving so like the brutes as that!"

"You see what kind of people we are up against," said Murr.

The peasant drooped his heavy head thoughtfully and walked back to his cottage. Murr and Kreusat followed him. At the door the peasant's wife was waiting for them. "Well, what's up now?" she said sullenly.

"Get a room cleared for these people," said the peasant.

"So that they can steal what remains of your cattle."

"They are reasonable people," he replied. "I can let you have the barn," he went on then, "but mind you don't set it on fire for me."

"We'll take care of that all right," Franz assured him, but the peasant waved his hand. "Don't promise too much!"

They left the house and went back to the sentries, who were beginning to feel the cold and grumble. "Will you go back?" Kreusat asked Murr. "Perhaps new contingents have arrived. See that you get a section or two to come back with you."

Murr nodded assent and slung his knapsack, which he had left beside the machine gun, over his shoulders. He shook hands with Kreusat and said: "If I am not back within half an hour take care who you fire at during the night. It's getting foggy and it won't be easy for us to find our way in the dark what with the fog and the bushes." Then he went off.

Franz made a tour of inspection. He was hungry, for he had taken no time off for food at the castle. He was very tired; his uneasiness had greatly increased after

Murr's departure. He sat on a stone near the machine gun and brooded over what lay before him.

An hour passed. He stood up and began to make the round of the sentries again. Everywhere he was met with anxious questions. Another hour went by. Franz felt as if he were being throttled. He sat down on the stone again. A thick mist arose in which the sun disappeared. The air became damper and colder. Soon the fog thickened so that one sentry could no longer see his neighbour.

Franz Kreusat ordered them to patrol the ground in between so that no one might slip by them. He was received by the men with surly words : "A man could cut your throat, and you'd be none the wiser," said one of the sentries.

"Be patient till help comes," said Franz. It was now nearly three hours since Murr had left. A regular rifle fire came from the Reichswehr outposts in front of them, and bullets often whistled past their heads.

"Take care, Franz. The Noskerites may attack in the darkness and then we shall be caught in a trap," growled a deep voice.

Franz got angry. "Don't mug yourselves. You all knew it was a question of life and death. Keep your eyes skinned and don't grumble. You held your tongues all right in the war when you were in the trenches for months at a time."

They stopped talking, peered with strained attention into the undergrowth, started at the slightest sound. If a dry twig snapped they sprang up and fired into the fog.

"Don't shoot each other in the fog," Franz warned them, especially the younger ones who were using a gun for the first time.

He went restlessly into the wavering darkness of the fog, groped his way to the castle, and sent all the unoccupied men to double the strength of the outposts. He then went on to the strip of woodland where the dwarf was posted with the old metal-worker. Both were cursing and staring

in front of them in uncertainty. The dwarf would not leave his post ; he had refused each relief for fear lest his successor would not be watchful enough.

"Halt, who goes there ?" "Wesel !" Franz gave the password which they had agreed upon.

"My God, you'd go crazy here," grumbled the metal-worker. "If I have to stand here staring much longer you'll have to cart me off to the madhouse tomorrow."

"No, it's all right," said the dwarf, who sensed how depressed Franz was. "The night is getting on. We can still hold out an hour or two. It's certainly no better for the Noskerites than for us ; they know no more than we do how things are."

Kreusat listened. One thing Schnidder had said was certainly true. The Reichswehr did not know the strength of the forces opposing them.; the fog was just as dangerous to their enemies as to themselves.

"They won't come *this* night," the dwarf argued himself into a state of courage, and peered like a watchdog into the darkness.

"If I hear a single sound, then I shall fire at once, so bear that in mind," said the metal-worker to Franz ; "I'd rather be killed than taken by surprise."

"We're expecting reinforcements," replied Franz, although he had long ago given up all hope of their arrival. The metal-worker uttered a suppressed laugh : "Do you really believe that ?"

"Take care, man," the dwarf tried to joke. "The red army is certainly on the way. Keep your pecker up !"

"Do you believe in miracles ?" grumbled the metal-worker and gripped his gun more tightly as there was a rustling in the bushes.

"An owl !" mocked the dwarf.

"You'll go on jabbering till you feel a Noskerite at your throat," the other growled.

"Let 'em come!" They went on quarrelling in whispers. Franz said nothing but listened tensely to the sounds which came from the surrounding woodland. A faint hope sprang up in him again. "Perhaps Murr will still come with help."

CHAPTER XI

THE third hour passed. Kreusat's faint hope was extinguished. He called the group leaders together. "We can't hope for reinforcements and Murr any longer," he said. "We've got to trust our luck and our own guts, comrades. We've got the lives of forty-five men to look after, and most of them have wives and kids. It isn't easy to know what to do. I think it's risky to go back because we don't know the ground. It's clear that we shall be in a tight corner if there's a surprise attack."

The leaders decided after a short discussion to keep a look-out through the night. They themselves took the most exposed positions. Kreusat was completely exhausted, and sat down again on the stone, his carbine with the safety catch released in his hand. Three yards ahead of him was the machine gun and its crew, ready for action. Before them was the palisade of faggots under which they were to take cover in the event of an attack.

Then someone called "Franz . . . Kreusat." A slight shiver of fear went through him; he stood up. "What is it ?" he asked.

The dwarf was standing there, trembling in every limb and in such excitement that he could hardly get a word out.

"What is it ?" insisted Franz.

The dwarf pointed in the direction of the strip of woodland and said hoarsely, "There—Franz, they're coming !"

"Who are coming ?" "The Noskerites." "Come with me !" Franz seized the little man by the arm and dragged him along.

"Are you mad, Franz ?" The dwarf resisted him.

" You're running right into their very jaws. There are lots of them."

" Come on ! " It was a command.

Franz had noticed that the other workers had become uneasy when the dwarf spoke.

" Let's get away from here before they smash our skulls in for us," said one.

" You are to stay here with the machine gun and fire the instant you hear shots from that bit of wood," declared Franz in a tone that brooked no contradiction. Then he ran to the outpost, the dwarf panting along behind him. The machine-gun crew took cover. Most of them were experienced ex-soldiers who had been in the war, and they realized that this time it was a matter of life and death.

The metal-worker stood behind a tree as if glued to the spot and listened in the direction of the open country, from which the dull sound of tramping could be heard. It came nearer and nearer. The tramp of more than a hundred men and a vague murmur of voices reached them through the ghostly fog which enveloped them.

" The Reichswehr ! " whispered the metal worker. " And here we are sitting in a trap and not a soul to help us ! " He seized his gun and raised it aloft to fire.

" Not yet," Franz Kreusat warned him.

" Do you want to wait till they're right on top of us ? " asked the metal-worker.

" We'll fire when we see the first," said Kreusat curtly.

All three waited with their guns ready. The metal-worker snarled impatiently. " Nonsense ! What are we waiting for ? " He raised his gun.

" Stop ! " cried Franz and dragged his gun down. " They're our own people ! " Only a few yards in front of them tall shapes appeared. Franz sprang forward shouting joyfully, " Murr, Murr, God damn you, only now . . . "

" I thought you wouldn't get back and was prepared for the worst," said Franz. . . . " How many men have you ? "

"Four companies," said Murr and drew the excited leader to one side. "In the morning we are to attack Wesel; there will be an attack along the entire front."

The little dwarf bounded about like a rubber ball, laughed and chuckled, chattered crazily and every few minutes embraced one of the new arrivals, who, laden with guns and ammunition, were marching by. The rest of Kreusat's men also surrounded the new-comers, talking noisily.

"Don't kick up such a row, comrades," Kreusat urged them. "We can be heard a mile away. . . ."

"Quick now, divide up your forces," he commanded. There were four companies of about a hundred and twenty men. Every second group had a machine gun. The third company had even brought a small trench mortar.

They were part of the best organized section of the red army, well disciplined, who, under the leadership of experienced soldiers and political commissars, were to attack Wesel, the main stronghold of General Watters, by a bold attack.

Franz Kreusat had regained his cheerfulness. "First company to the castle," he ordered. "You take them, Murr, you know the way."

Under Franz's orders, the second and third companies occupied the barn which the peasant had placed at their disposal. The fourth advanced to the right and sent forward scouts to get in touch with the troops on the other side of the railway embankment.

"As soon as you're ready, I want the company commanders to come and discuss the next move," said Kreusat, and went to see that all was going well.

Strong outposts, equipped with machine guns, were established, and strong patrols despatched to ascertain the position of the Reichswehr. This was not easy, for the fog made visibility very bad and the men had to work by sound only.

"What do you think, Franz?" asked the dwarf, who

now wanted to go to the peasant's cottage. "Don't you think they'll get a whopping now?" He rubbed his thin hands together—a sign of excessive excitement.

"Nearly five hundred men!" replied Franz and, seizing the dwarf, he swung him off his feet. "There'll be an attack, I tell you, man," gasped the dwarf. "There'll be a hell of a dust-up!" "You've always been the first to want a scrap, you spouter!" laughed a clear, cheerful voice. It was the fair-haired boy. "Ah, it's you, you snivelling brat!" roared the dwarf. "You'll run away to-morrow as soon as the first shot's fired, you snotty object!" The boy laughed again. "You'll have no luck. I've been under fire already." All was well now; the fear of the hours which had passed was forgotten.

Franz Kreusat went into the peasant's house. From the barn came a cheerful noise from the men billeted there.

"My God, wherever have so many men come from?" asked the peasant's wife in astonishment. "I'd be scared if they were soldiers."

"They are the best kind of soldiers," replied Franz, and could not help smiling, for the peasant's wife looked shocked each time an oath rang out from the barn; "they are soldiers without the usual strait-jackets." He remembered his talk with Murr and added proudly, "Soldiers of the Revolution!"

"Well, well," said the peasant's wife, still rather doubtfully, "we'll keep an eye on the hens and cattle so that they aren't pinched; you can't deceive me!"

"Don't talk like that," said the peasant. "You know the Reichswehr also 'requisitioned' things."

"We don't allow stealing or looting," said Franz.

Messengers came in to report that they had got in touch with the workers on the other side of the railway.

An hour later the company leaders came in. The leader of the first contingent was a big, broad-shouldered man with glasses, wearing the coat of a warrant officer. A sailor led the second company, and an elderly worker with a

strong face and rough, jerky movements the third. They sat round the table and waited for the commander of the fourth company, which had taken over the right wing.

"We must elect a leader," said the warrant officer, and looked towards the older man.

"Yes, that will be necessary," he replied. "When we attack Wesel to-morrow we can't be at sixes and sevens; the others are all under one command."

"We will elect you." Franz here entered the conversation, and looked at the two others, who nodded assent.

The leader of the fourth company entered the low-ceilinged room of the cottage. Franz learnt that this man was a metal-worker, called Schotte. He was partly in uniform, being dressed in grey army trousers, infantry boots and a civilian's coat, and with a steel helmet on his bullet head. Like Schnidder, he wore round his waist two full cartridge pouches and hand grenades.

Schotte talked a lot. He abused Noske, defended Severing and upbraided Ebert for his tolerance. "If they had left us organized trade unionists our guns we'd soon have restored order," he said. Schotte had been ill-treated by the greencoats during a demonstration and was very angry about it. "Naturally I'm in favour of protecting the Constitution and don't want to fill the workers' heads with ideas about seizing power and having their own government," he said. As he changed his opinions his expression changed too. The old Bolshevik, Franz noticed, regarded the speaker with a derisive smile. As Schotte continued talking, he made a gesture with his hand and said, "That'll do; we have more important things to discuss now."

"What do you want to discuss, then?" asked Schotte, who did not like the other's tone.

"To-morrow's attack."

"Is there much to discuss, then?"

"A great deal." Kehr, the Bolshevik, turned to the others. "First we must decide who is to take command."

" You," said the warrant officer. Schotte could not resist having his say : " Can you manage it ? "

" Yes, I think so."

" We daren't take any risks without a good leader, comrades," said Schotte. " That is to say, one with experience . . ."

" He led a regiment in Russia," said Franz, who was annoyed by Schotte's reflections.

" The Reichswehr has officers," said Schotte, raising his eyebrows meaningly.

" It doesn't matter whether the leaders of the red army wear silver or gold epaulets," replied Kehr sharply. " The chief thing is that they know their business."

Schotte gabbled something about being misunderstood and looked irritably at the other leaders, who signified their agreement with Kehr and turned to a map which the warrant officer had brought with him and spread out on the table.

CHAPTER XII

THE peasant and his wife sat crouched in their bedroom, but did not sleep. From the barn came snores and a murmur of voices.

The leaders took council by the dim light of a lamp. They were so engrossed that they did not notice that dawn was approaching. Schotte, who found the discussion boring, leant back and fell asleep.

"He's asleep," said Franz indignantly, pointing to Schotte. "Let him sleep on," said the sailor.

"What, not finished yet?" The peasant stood at the door and yawned sleepily.

"Haven't you slept?" asked Kreusat.

"How can anybody sleep?" growled the peasant. "All you can do is to listen to that row from the barn. How can anybody close an eye with that shindy going on?"

"And this is the third night of it!" grumbled his wife, who now appeared behind her husband.

"There is a war on," replied Kehr.

"War!" grumbled the peasant's wife. "Then it is we who get the worst of it."

"If we win things will be better for you," said Kehr; "the Russian peasants had to make sacrifices too to win their freedom."

"We're in Germany here, not Russia."

"It is just as bad for the German peasant now as it was for the Russians. Work and pay up; or have you managed to put anything by after all your work?"

"The war has ruined us," said the man. "We have to begin from the beginning again."

"Under the present system you can work yourselves to death, but you will always have to give up what you make by your industry to the capitalists."

"How can we alter things?" asked the woman with a weary gesture.

"In Russia the peasants joined forces with the industrial workers against their common enemy."

Kehr talked like Murr. Franz looked at the calm face of the speaker, whom no objections could ruffle or distract.

Kehr stood up. "We shall always endeavour, in spite of every false accusation and calumny and abuse, to show our honesty of purpose and our unshakable belief in our fight for freedom." He stretched out his rough hands to the astonished peasants as they stood there vaguely trying to comprehend.

"Won't you have a drop of hot coffee?" asked the woman and made as though to build up the fire.

"Put on a big kettle of water; we've brought coffee with us," said the warrant officer and took the sailor by the arm. Kehr followed them into the open air, while Franz gave the sleeping Schotte a shake and shouted, "Wake up!"

Schotte rubbed his eyes and blinked as he tried to recollect where he was. "Something up?" he asked anxiously. "Yes, there is something up," replied Franz. "Go to your men and await orders."

Kreusat was told to take over the left wing. With the Hamborn men, with whom a junction had been effected, he had the task of clearing the head of the bridge over the Lippe of Reichswehr troops, skirting the left side of the railway and operating from there.

The warrant officer and the sailor had the middle sector and were to attack as soon as the left wing had got into position. Kehr himself directed the right wing; he did not trust Schotte and fell out with him at once when they discussed the plan of operations.

"I won't be dictated to by anybody," Schotte persisted.

"I brought the company here and I am responsible for it."

"You're relieved of that responsibility now there's a central command," said Kehr, "and you will have to serve under that command."

Schotte realized that he was up against a man who would stand no nonsense, and who was capable of depriving him of his position, and he tried to make the best of it.
"Who says I won't serve under it?" he asked.

"Your own behaviour shows it," replied Kehr. "How should I behave then?" said Schotte angrily. "You are a malcontent." Schotte bit his thick under-lip and looked down. Kehr looked past him towards some of the men in Schotte's section who had come up. He beckoned to a short, sturdy man. "What organization do you belong to?" he asked.

"I belong to the I.S.P.G.*," replied the man.

"Then you'd better take over political responsibility here," said Kehr. Schotte looked at him in surprise and interrupted him angrily. "Does that mean you mistrust me?"

"No, it's only an extra precaution," replied Kehr. "There is more than the reputation of an individual at stake now, comrade. You will retain the military leadership of your company, but you must submit to political guidance and control."

Schotte flushed and muttered something under his breath. Kehr talked for a while with the Independent and assured himself that he was a reliable comrade and that his look of intelligence, on account of which he had singled him out from the others, had not misled him.

* Independent Socialist Party of Germany.

CHAPTER XIII

"**W**ELL, mind you win," said the peasant when Franz shook hands with him on his departure.

"We'll win for you too," answered Franz, and went to seek his contingent, whom he found in a tremendous state of excitement and expectancy.

"Are we attacking?" "Is something happening?"

"Yes, in a minute," said Franz and called his group leaders to him again. He told them the plan of attack and ordered them to prepare to start. In the wood through which they must soon advance isolated shots rang out, and at intervals the rattle of a machine gun was heard.

Bullets whistled through the trees, snapping off dry twigs as they passed. Crash! Whizz! Crash! A battery in the fortress opened fire, and shells passed over the wood.

Involuntarily the workers ducked and threw themselves on the ground, listening anxiously to the ominous sounds in the wood.

"That's a Ratscher gun!" remarked a man who had had experience of them.

A cyclist came along the road through the wood, leapt from his machine and ran up to Kreusat's contingent. "Where's your leader?" Franz stepped forward. "Set your watch, we are to advance in three minutes."

Franz set his watch to that of the courier. "Three minutes to eight," said the messenger hurriedly and rode off.

Kreusat gave the command to stand by, and held his watch in his hand. Then he gave the signal and they began to move.

Five minutes later the first shots of the attack rang out.

The workers attacked the Reichswehr outposts and drove out the pickets with bombs.

There was firing in the neighbourhood of the Lippe. Then the Hamborn storm troops advanced over the bridge to join in the attack ; and the concealed machine guns of the Reichswehr raked the bridge with a murderous fire.

Through the woods crawled a serpentine procession, the second workers' storming party. Kreusat with the left wing reached the Lippe and was able to signal to the men on the opposite bank.

They frequently had to take cover, for the Reichswehr troops were spraying the thicket with machine-gun bullets. Franz Kreusat ordered them to advance now by short runs, to avoid taking unnecessary risks.

They advanced, taking cover behind the trees and wood-stacks, threw themselves to the ground, and tried to locate the enemy snipers who were firing from concealed vantage points in the wood.

"Crawl ! " ordered Kreusat and pointed to a clearing in the wood some fifty yards ahead. "There's the railway ; keep it under fire."

The railway embankment appeared to be strongly fortified ; there was continuous rifle fire from it, and machine guns poured volley after volley into the wood where a section of the workers' force had ventured too far forward and been seen by the Noskerites.

The long trail disappeared into the wood. Then a hundred rifles spoke and fired over to the railway embankment. "Now hell's loose," said the dwarf, flushing and paling with excitement as he fired shot after shot with trembling hands.

The workers had frequently to flatten themselves on the ground, for a hail of bullets covered them as they moved into position. The Reichswehr had soon seen their danger and were doing all they could to make it as difficult as possible for Kreusat's men to reach the bridge.

The dwarf did not trouble to take proper cover. "I can't see where to aim," he complained and, in spite of all warnings, fired over towards the railway, kneeling behind a tree till the man with the deep voice seized him by the coat and pulled him to the ground.

"Are you crazy, you idiot? Can't you see the trees are half cut through and you are liable to stop one in the head any minute?"

"Well, they haven't got me yet!" said the dwarf triumphantly.

"How could anyone think they'd catch Schnidder!" mocked the fair-haired boy from behind a bush.

"What do you want, you snivelling brat?" shouted the dwarf, lying on his side, looking at the splintered tree trunks. "Hell, what fine music!"

In spite of the seriousness of their situation, the other workers had to laugh at the little man. A panic-stricken shriek broke in on their hilarity; a couple of yards to their right a man staggered to his feet, his face streaming with blood. He clawed the air as if seeking support, then fell down heavily on the withered leaves.

"The first!" growled the deep-voiced worker.

Kreusat crawled up to the man who had been hit. He had a bullet in the head and was twisted as though with cramp. He was a butty from Schönebeck who had joined Kreusat's contingent.

"Dead?" asked Murr and raised himself a little.

"Yes, dead," replied Franz Kreusat, and again threw himself on the ground, for the Noskerite fire intensified. "Keep under cover, comrades, or there'll be more like *him*," he warned his men. He had fired two or three further shots when another man collapsed shrieking; his hands clutched at the bushes and he began to moan.

"Bandage him up!" said Kreusat to Murr. Murr crawled to the wounded man and did his best to bandage him. The rain of bullets increased; like a swarm of bees they buzzed and hummed over the crouching men; shells

crashed into the tree trunks, shattering them ; branches fell torn off by ricochetting bullets. The men dared not even raise their heads.

The Reichswehr had got the range of Kreusat's men so well that they were temporarily unable to return their fire. Their machine guns were occupying cleverly-concealed positions on the outskirts of the wood, from which they could take good aim.

"We shan't advance a yard like this," said Murr to Kreusat. "Now then, don't raise your head or you'll get something in it," grumbled a deep voice.

Franz Kreusat reflected and tried to look to his right. Unwittingly he raised his head a little and whizz—just missing his face, a bullet flattened against the tree beside which he was lying.

"Hell," he said bitterly. "What are we to do?" Again it was Murr who reassured him : "Shoot whenever we can, and wait till the other comrades attack."

"Let's storm them!" advised the dwarf, who was lying beside the fair-haired boy. "Blockhead!" growled the older man. "Do you want to storm them alone?"

Whssh ! pht ! pht ! A few yards behind them a volley of shrapnel burst over the wood. The men were silent, and buried themselves as deep as possible in the leaves.

Another man shrieked. "Bandages!" called a worker from the undergrowth on the right. "Stretcher bearer," he moaned. "Stretch-er bear-er."

"Lie down!" Murr warned him, and crawled over and tried to bandage the wounded man. It was not easy ; a ricochetting bullet had smashed his ribs. He roared like an animal in pain, while a stream of blood welled up over Murr's hands and stained the earth round him.

CHAPTER XIV

THINGS went on like this for nearly three-quarters of an hour. In the meanwhile the struggle round the bridge raged even more fiercely. The Hamborn workers, who had already been repulsed half a dozen times, kept on renewing their attack on this hotly-contested spot, endeavouring to effect a junction with Kreusat's company and to effect a rear attack on the Noskerites on the railway embankment. Obstinateily the shock troops fought their way forward in spite of the continuous fire sweeping the bridge.

"We must smoke out that nest of machine guns over there," said Murr, and pointed between the trees to an undulation in the ground, from which came a ceaseless rattle. This position had to be approached very cautiously, but once these machine guns were disabled it would render the passage of the bridge to the Hamborn troops considerably easier.

"I will come with you," said Kreusat, and selected four strong men armed with revolvers and hand grenades.

"I'll crawl on ahead and you follow me," said Murr. He endeavoured to reach a row of woodstacks from which a deeper furrow led to a small group of buildings to which the storming party must work its way under cover.

With bated breath those who were left behind watched Murr and his five companions leave the woodstacks one by one, about two yards apart, and move towards the buildings. Meanwhile Kreusat's machine guns directed a rapid fire at the rising ground behind which lay their objective.

With lacerated hands and filthy clothes the six men reached the buildings unobserved and paused for breath.

Scarcely fifty yards away two machine guns rattled. Murr surveyed the position from behind a heap of roots. He was trying to determine the number of the Noskerites whose heads showed from time to time as they looked towards the bridge.

Kreusat's party had worked round to the right and almost reached the flank of the gun emplacement. In order to throw their grenades without being seen, they had to make their way to two manure heaps in the field.

"Come on single file," ordered Franz, and unfastened two hand grenades. Then he crawled forward, Murr and the others following. As they crawled along they heard explosions from the bridge. However, they did not allow themselves to be distracted, but worked their way on, as flat against the ground as possible, along the furrow till they came to the dung heaps.

Franz waited till they were all there, and then gave the signal—"All together, go!" The hand grenades whirled over. There was a second's pause and then a series of explosions. A column of dirt and flames rose up. Shrieks were heard, and a few Noskerites sprang up and stumbled across the field. Murr levelled his pistol and killed one of them from a distance of barely ten yards. The others were shot down by the rifles of the workers at the edge of the wood.

The Hamborn men had observed the attack on the nest of machine guns, and attempted a last desperate charge. In spite of the shrapnel which killed several of them, they cleared the bridge and worked their way across it, and a bitter hand-to-hand conflict developed on the bank.

Murr and Kreusat crawled on further, and met a couple of fleeing Noskerites who defended themselves desperately. Before Kreusat had time to get to his feet a stalwart soldier hurled himself at him and threw him to the ground again, and his hands clawed at Franz's face, trying to gouge his eyes out.

Kreusat, who was underneath, realized with terror the

soldier's intention and tried with all his might to drag his assailant's hands from his face ; the Noskerite dug his nails in with the fury of madness.

"Let go!" gasped Kreusat, whose upper lip had been torn. He got hold of one of the fingers which were gripping him and bent it back with a jerk ; the bone cracked and the soldier loosed his hold with a loud yell.

Kreusat gripped the soldier's neck with both hands and squeezed till the man's face became purple ; then with a mighty heave he got the soldier underneath him. It was a life and death struggle. The Noskerite tried to kick him, and Franz held him down with one hand and hit him with his clenched fist.

The Noskerite collapsed, and lay stunned. Kreusat grabbed his pistol, which was lying near, and was about to finish him off when Murr yelled, "Franz! take cover!"

Kreusat had not noticed that he was almost out in the open, and that the only reason the Noskerites had not fired was in order to avoid killing their own men ; now their rifles blazed. Franz threw himself down in the nick of time.

The Noskerite regained consciousness and stared at Franz in terror. "Don't shoot, Kamerad!" he whined.

"You didn't intend to spare me, you cur!" replied Kreusat, as he looked at the swollen face of his enemy. He appeared to be a peasant youth.

Murr had also made a prisoner. The soldier, when he caught sight of the worker, had at once put up his hands and begged him to spare his life.

The storming party lay for a while under cover and waited while the Hamborn men and part of Kreusat's contingent rushed forward and attacked the railway embankment, from which firing was still proceeding. They cleared it with hand grenades and turned the machine guns on the fleeing soldiers.

Murr had learnt something from his prisoner. "We are weak," the Noskerite told him. "We're waiting for reinforcements and we all reckon that you'll take Wesel."

On the right heavy firing was coming from both sides. Here the warrant officer and his men were advancing, and at a given moment the workers emerged from the wood, which curved back in that spot, and charged over the open ground towards the railway.

"Get ready," said Franz to his men, who lay under cover. "We'll attack with them!"

They passed on the order. Then, at a wave of Kreusat's hand, they sprang up and rushed forward. The dwarf, who had thrown himself behind a bush, also leapt up. Just as he did so a blow struck him in the middle of the forehead and he fell to the ground.

"Schnidder!" yelled the fair-haired boy, "Schnidder's hit!" But the others were already charging across the open field.

In the middle of the field stood a few sheds and cottages. On the right the attack slackened somewhat, while on the left the workers were checked by rapid fire from a signal box.

"Take cover!" ordered Franz. "Fire the machine guns!" The artilleryman and the ex-Reichswehr soldier opened fire at once; window panes and tiles were splintered and flew in all directions.

The artilleryman went on firing, his comrade supplying him with belt after belt of ammunition. The gunner, with a hail of bullets round him, fired doggedly at the signal box so long as its occupants replied, and then, when the firing ceased, at the soldiers who fled from out of it into the open.

Crash! To the right of the machine gun a shell exploded and covered the crew with earth, but the gunner did not stop. Then the second machine gun began firing at the signal box. Crash! A second shell fell to the left of the machine gun, which was still in action. Crash! A third shell. This time it exploded very close to the gun. Two men screamed. The group which had taken cover behind a piece of wall were hidden by a cloud of dust and smoke.

After a few seconds the cloud dispersed and some of the

men rushed to one side ; two remained lying by the wall—dead.

"Everything's going to hell here," cried the fair boy and made his way, trembling, to Franz's side.

"Retreat, single file !" ordered Kreusat. It was hard for him to give the order, but the Noskerites seemed to have received reinforcements, and the attack on their right flank seemed to have slackened. They hauled the machine gun to better cover and opened fire on the earthwork behind which they suspected the presence of the trench mortar.

CHAPTER XV

"SCHNIDDER'S gone!" wailed the boy to Kreusat; "he got shot through the head."

The death of the cheerful little man depressed them all. Sadly they turned towards the spot where his body lay. "Dig him a grave," said Murr to the others standing by.

"It's a damned shame about him," growled the gruff man as he took up his spade.

Then something occurred which troubled Kreusat and Murr. On the enemy's side gun after gun ceased firing; the trench mortars were also silent and the defence slackened considerably. "What's up now?" asked Franz, and looked at Murr. Murr was at a loss to reply. "Something fishy," he answered suspiciously.

They waited to see whether the workers on the right would attack again, but there also the attack seemed to have died down. "Good heavens, what's up?" queried Franz. He ordered his men to stand by and keep under cover.

"The Noskerites are decamping," called a worker.

"They're not decamping yet," replied the man who was digging Schnidder's grave. "Look out, they've got us in a trap and are cutting off our retreat!"

"Don't get the wind up," said Franz. "We'll send someone over to Kehr."

Through the trees came a courier. "Kreusat!" he called and beckoned to Franz. "What the hell's up?" asked the latter excitedly. "Why aren't we going on?"

"A truce is being made somewhere or other," said the courier, "but Kehr doesn't believe in the ruse and wants

you to leave your men at their posts and come to him at once."

"A truce!" Murr gave a suppressed laugh. "Who with?"

"With the Noskerites; who else?" replied the courier.

"There'll be no truce with them till they're all disarmed," said Murr, red with anger.

"Come on, we'll go to Kehr," said Kreusat hastily, and ordered his men not to leave their posts, but to fire at once if the Noskerites reopened hostilities.

They both accompanied the courier. Kehr was with the third company and waiting for Franz.

The old Bolshevik welcomed him. "Think of the idiocy of it!" he said. "In Bielefeld a handful of Social Democrats and God knows who else have made a truce with Watter!"

"There can be no truce for us," Murr replied. "If we do that we shall only be giving the Reichswehr time to bring up reinforcements; that's how they'll reward us for our stupidity."

"That's what I think too," said Kehr. "I am not going to allow it; we'll go on fighting."

"I agree," said Franz with relief. "Just now, when we are about to capture the bridge and the railway and can take Wesel by a strong attack, they start a stunt like this!"

"We'll hear whether the rest of the comrades think the same," said Kehr, and waited till the other company commanders came up.

"Let's send someone to Headquarters," said the warrant officer, whose company had suffered the severest losses in the attack.

"What good will that do us?" the sailor argued. "We are here, and we're not going to be stopped by any such rot."

"Will you take Wesel off your own bat, then?" asked Schotte, who had just come up to take part in the conversa-

tion. In spite of the protests of the political commissar, he had given his contingent orders to be ready to retreat.

"He is confusing the men," said the little Independent, who had come with Schotte, angrily. "Who's confusing them?" roared Schotte. "You are!" The short man sprang forward and faced the company commander, carried away by rage. "What orders have you given? Tell them that!" "We are withdrawing to the place we started from as the truce lays down," said Schotte.

"You can't give orders on your own." Kehr's fist was raised. "You've got to do what's decided here."

"What do you want to do, then?" replied Schotte angrily. "Who makes the final decision here? If every section commander on the front wants to manage things as *he* thinks, where shall we get to?"

"That's enough," said Kehr; "if you want to go, then go, but don't get talking to the men."

"I shall do what I think right," replied Schotte in a defiant tone, and looked from one to the other. He saw that his point of view was not shared and went off.

CHAPTER XVI

IT was the 24th of March. Couriers came with conflicting tidings. "Withdraw to where you started from." "No man is to leave his post." "Withdraw gradually."

"They have gone crazy," said Kehr angrily.

Workers came running up. "The miners are retreating," one informed them.

"Where from?" yelled Kehr, and grew pale with rage.

"Everywhere; whole contingents are leaving."

"Who's started that again?" roared the field commander and stormed into the wood, where he certainly found workers going back with their guns unslung.

"Halt! What are you doing?" Kehr shouted after them. "No one's to go; all are to stay here. That's the order."

"Get away!" a group leader called to him. "Stay and fight by yourself if you want to. Come on, boys."

"That cursed mongrel Schotte ought to be shot," raged the sailor. "Here he comes," said Murr, who had noticed Schotte at the head of a section marching through the trees. Murr barred the way.

"What are you doing?" asked Murr angrily. "Have you gone daft?"

"I have already told you that I was retiring," replied Schotte, half nervously and half spitefully.

"You're mad," shouted Kehr, who had just come up. "Either you lead your section back to its post at once or up you go against a tree."

"You can't shoot a man as easily as all that," said a man from the section.

" You see who upsets the troops," said Schotte, to whom the worker's interruption had given new courage. " If you go on like that don't be surprised if the boys get fed up."

He pushed Murr to one side and signed to the waiting workers.

" Bloody fool ! " shouted the sailor after him ; " you've got your pals into a nice mess ! You'll get landed some time ! "

Schotte smiled contemptuously and hurried on.

Kehr now tried to stop the men from the other groups from leaving, but few listened to him ; the majority marched on.

With heavy hearts the leaders looked after the retreating sections. Kehr returned and said hoarsely, " If it goes on like this the Bielefeld people will get what they wanted."

He sat down on a tree-stump and buried his face in his hands. Kreusat saw that Kehr, that strong, brave man, was weeping.

Soon Kehr stood up again. " Go back to your companies ; arrest any man who suggests going back. We will go on fighting."

Just as Kreusat was leaving Kehr gripped hold of his arm. " You can go to the other side of the Lippe," he said, " and see what's happened there." Franz nodded and beckoned to Murr, and they went off through the wood.

On the way they met more troops. These, like the others, could not be induced to remain. " Go on home, there's a truce," was the reply to their expostulations.

When they returned to the contingent they were besieged with questions. " What's up ? Shall we be going too ? "

" We're staying here," said Kreusat curtly.

" Lots of them have gone back," said the deep-voiced man discontentedly.

" They've been misled," Murr explained.

" Damn it, what are the idiots doing ? At this rate we'll

be going back soon enough," grumbled the gunner, who had also approached them.

The men were all grumbling. Here, too, the poison had spread.

Franz put the gunner in charge and told him not to listen to any further nonsense ; then he looked at Murr. "Come on, let's go."

In a quarter of an hour they reached the Lippe. Murr went down the bank and found the boat which he had used earlier in the day, after they had stormed the castle.

He called to Franz and rowed over to the opposite bank, where they met some workers.

"Where are your headquarters ?" Kreusat asked them. They pointed out a thicket behind which a cottage could be seen, and they went towards it. When they entered the little room in the cottage the leaders were assembled and talking excitedly.

"Where have you come from ?" asked one of them.

"We're on the railway embankment on the other side of the river," Franz replied.

"How are things with you ?"

"Our lot have gone daft with the talk about a truce ; some of them have gone home."

"And you let them ?" asked the commandant angrily.
"Who's your section commander, then ?"

"Kehr did all he could," said Franz in some confusion ; "there were others who talked the men over."

"Why didn't you shoot the rats ?" said the commandant furiously. "What the hell does it matter to us what tricks a few bureaucrats are up to ? We're going on fighting, d'you understand ?"

"It's the Hagen command that's doing it," said one of the leaders. "Their section's under the Hagen crowd."

"Rats like that ought to be shot," said the commandant grimly. "It's nothing short of treachery, just now, when we've nearly taken the town, to make a deal like that."

He turned to Kreusat and Murr and said severely, "Go

back to your contingent and tell the men that we're going on fighting. We've sent the Reichswehr commanders an ultimatum to say that if the garrison of Wesel hasn't surrendered to a man by two o'clock we shall shell the place."

Franz drew a deep breath, and said to Murr when they came to the river bank again, "Perhaps things aren't over yet. If they attack, then our lot will pull themselves together again."

"You heard who caused the trouble?" said Murr. "The Hagen command is to blame because they have been flirting with the negotiators in Bielefeld. Swine like that are no good to a revolutionary army; there's another place for them!"

They crossed the Lippe again, and as they passed through the wood there was a dull explosion like thunder a long way behind them. Franz looked at his watch, "The ultimatum has expired. . . . Our guns are shelling Wesel!"

Fragments of steel went shrieking through the air above the wood and crashed against the fortifications of the town.

When they reached the contingent again their companions had buried Schnidder.

On account of the confusion caused by the news of the truce the front line on the right bank of the Lippe was considerably weakened and unable to undertake a strong offensive. The section on the left bank continued to bombard the town, and harassed the Reichswehr by fierce rifle fire, but the capture of the city—after the defence had refused to surrender—was now greatly delayed through the hesitation of the troops on the right bank, who owing to conflicting instructions had as yet come to no decision.

Kehr made every possible effort to obtain reinforcements. A few contingents, who did not support the neutrality of the Hagen leadership, came to his aid. These, however, by no means sufficed to fill the gaps in the front line, and the section—the workers who had remained were also

discontented—was crippled by the continuous departure of separate small contingents.

Two days passed thus. Kreusat's contingent had dug trenches and confined themselves to replying to the enemy's fire, and small raiding parties sallied out during the night to bomb the Reichswehr outposts, which were now gradually advancing.

CHAPTER XVII

BY March 27th, all hopes of the arrival of new forces having been wrecked by the passive attitude of the Hagen command, Kehr called the remaining leaders together and informed them of his decision to withdraw his front line as far as Schermbeck.

The sailor still objected, but Kehr explained his difficulties. "Everything is paralysed on the right. We've no line of communication between here and the railway because of the desertions from the front line, and we might get cut off."

Murr stood like a man sentenced to death. Kehr gripped his hand. "This is not the end of our struggle, comrade," he urged. "You were once in Russia ; there too we often had to go a roundabout way to attack all the better later on."

Murr only nodded. He looked at Kreusat and said : "What do you think of it ? "

"If we're running the risk of being cut off, then it's better to agree to what Kehr says. But I, for one, won't take any more orders from that defeatist Hagen lot. I wouldn't be surprised if one fine day they come to surrendering the guns that we risked our lives to get."

"Not one cartridge will be surrendered, comrade," said Kehr. "I'd rather tie a bomb round my neck and die that way than give up my gun," growled the sailor bitterly. "We'll resist a command like that by force if necessary," said the warrant officer, joining in.

They decided to retreat on Schermbeck. The move was to be carried out in echelon formation, a group from each

company was to stay behind with a machine gun to cover its retreat.

Kreusat kept back the artilleryman, the ex-Reichswehr man, with two others and the light machine gun, and entrusted the leadership of the retiring body to the man with the deep voice. He then looked for a good emplacement where they could train the gun on the advancing Noskerites. Murr also remained with him.

Shortly before nightfall the contingents left the front one by one, and disappeared almost noiselessly into the wood in scattered formation. Kreusat intended to move the machine gun during the night, but he had forgotten one enemy—the fog.

As on the evening of their arrival at the front, an impenetrable grey veil settled down on the wood. The only reassuring fact was that the Reichswehr showed no sign of life.

Kreusat advised them not to advance into the fog, and told the gunner, in the event of a surprise attack, to blow up the machine gun. After that each one of them was to make his own way back.

Towards midnight the Reichswehr outposts became less peaceful ; their machine guns opened fire rapidly and men had to take better cover to avoid casualties. At intervals the gunner replied to their fire in order to mislead them, while further to the right in the wood another machine gun rattled.

"Those are our men," said Kreusat ; "there are still some there!" The hours dragged slowly by. The workers, whose clothing had been soaked through by the damp mist, were shivering, and waited grumbling for the morning which seemed reluctant to dawn.

The Reichswehr fired rapidly at intervals, twigs snapped and fell rustling to the ground, and terror was added to the discomfort of the men as they lay peering into the darkness. Suddenly there was an explosion in the wood to their left.

"What was that?" they asked one another and listened fearfully. "Grenades," said the gunner. "Ours?" "From the Noskerites!" The machine guns started to right and left of them, then came the noise of more hand grenades.

"They've rumbled something," said Murr. "Come on, one belt more through, and then blow the gun up and run," ordered Kreusat.

With bitter rage the gunner took the last belt of ammunition and fired.

"Take care," whispered Murr, "they're attacking on the right."

To the right of them some hand grenades exploded. The gunner turned and fired in the direction of the sound.

"Come on, chuck a bomb in and blow it up!" They rushed away; a sheet of flame leapt high in the air behind them; the machine gun exploded.

On the right the machine gun was silent, but bombs exploded in quick succession. "Our going has given the game away," said Murr, as he ran back.

The gunner and the other three men were already out of sight. Kreusat wanted to call them back. "Let them run," Murr advised him. "Now, each for himself." He held his right arm before his face to shield it from the undergrowth and dragged Franz after him.

"Stop a minute!" cried Kreusat, and they stood still for a moment, their breath coming fast.

"I did hear it then," whispered Franz in terror; "did you hear that scream?" He motioned with his arm to the right.

"The Noskerites have caught one of our men," growled Murr.

"And we don't know when we may run into their jaws," said Franz.

"Do you want to wait till they catch you?" asked Murr.

"Come on then."

"All right."

They no longer ran blindly, but advanced warily, stopping every now and then to listen for sounds from the wood. They had already been more than an hour on their road ; the twilight before dawn came on and they could see their way better.

Kreusat looked at his watch. It had stopped. "Now we're out of time!" he said, trying to laugh.

"Keep your gun ready instead," replied Murr. They rested awhile and looked at one another.

"Where are we?" asked Franz. "Yes, where?" echoed Murr.

They sprang up. In their immediate neighbourhood two shots rang out. "Hush!" Murr slipped to the ground and dragged Franz after him. "The Noskerites!" he whispered almost under his breath. By a swift glance between the trees he had seen two steel helmets.

Further to their left they heard a shriek. Murr raised his head a little and saw a worker running before half a dozen soldiers, who fired after him, yelling : "Stand still! you cur!" "Stop! you scum!" Then blows rained down upon him ; they heard something snap. They were breaking his bones.

"They've beaten him to death," snarled Murr, white as a sheet. He raised his gun, but there was not a soldier to be seen.

"You'll give yourself away," Franz warned him. "We'll meet the same fate as that poor devil if there are any more of them about."

Murr reflected and lowered his gun. "What now?" he asked. Franz listened to the sound of voices which was growing fainter as the men went off into the wood on the left, and said, "Wait."

It was curious that, in spite of the terrible position in which they were, Franz had become quite calm again. Murr, on the other hand, was so excited that he could hardly keep still when he heard the Noskerites ; he shook with eagerness to fire at them.

"Let's creep a bit more to the right, perhaps we'll find some hole or other there to hide in," suggested Franz.

They had to make many a troublesome detour to avoid meeting the soldiers who were still searching the wood. Exhausted by their painful journey, at last they found a barn in the middle of the wood.

"Let's get in there," said Kreusat. They worked their way warily round the barn, loosened a few planks on the further side and forced them apart.

"Get in," said Murr in a low voice, and then glanced round the wood to see if anyone were in sight. Then he too crept through the hole and pulled the planks together again from the inside. The planks creaked a little.

They held their breath and listened. "Safe for a minute," said Kreusat. They crept over the straw further into the barn and then heard steps coming from the yard.

When Kreusat had made his way through the heap of straw, he saw that the barn door had been opened. With lightning swiftness he withdrew his head, but a woman's voice screamed at once : "Jesus and Mary, thieves ! There are thieves in the barn !"

"We're done !" said Kreusat, and looked at Murr, who was also scared. "She'll bring the Reichswehr down on us !" said the latter hoarsely and went to the barn door from which he had a view of the yard.

From the cottage behind the barn appeared a thick-set peasant with an exceedingly red face. The woman who had run shrieking into the house stood behind him, urging him to do something. Murr heard the peasant calming her. "No, wait a minute, now."

"Friends !" Murr called to them, coming to the door. "Don't be alarmed, we're friends. We're not stealing, we're fugitives."

"There !" screeched the woman. "There they are !"

"Don't yell like that !" said the peasant angrily, and came over to the barn looking perplexed. "Get out of that," he said to Murr, "what are you doing there ?"

"They want to steal something!" screamed the woman.

"I've told you we're being hunted," repeated Murr and took a step forward out of the barn.

"Look out, Murr! the Noskerites!" cried Franz, and dragged him into the barn again.

"Well I never!" muttered the peasant, and turned to face five soldiers who had come round the house.

"What's up here?" asked the foremost soldier. The man was silent and looked doubtfully at the barn. His wife, however, pointed to the barn, saying excitedly: "They've gone in there!" The soldier, who was apparently a patrol leader, squinted at the barn and beckoned to the waiting men, saying: "Clear them out!"

The soldiers rushed towards the barn. "Halt, or we fire!" yelled Murr.

"On you go!" shouted the leader. "Smoke the swine out with a bomb!"

"Don't you set my barn on fire!" stormed the woman. The peasant remonstrated with the leader, who shouted angrily: "Into the house with you!" and raised his revolver. The peasant's wife screamed with terror and dragged her husband back into the house.

One of the Noskerites loosened the pin of a hand grenade, while the others stood waiting and looking nervously at the barn. "Go on, look sharp!" snapped the leader. The man wanted to draw back, but a shot rang out from the barn and he fell at full length on the ground and lay still. The other soldiers, one of whom threw his gun away, fled behind the house, where their leader had already disappeared.

"Now we must fight for our lives," said Murr to Kreusat, who was staring stupidly at the dead soldier, who lay only a few yards from their hiding place. "Take the gun and look for a good spot," Murr urged him, and crouched low again as a steel helmet came into view round the corner of the house.

Bang! His second shot rang out. Kreusat crouched behind a chaff-cutter and raised his rifle. They had an

excellent view of the yard. Behind the house the leader was swearing; Murr recognized him by his hoarse voice.

"How much longer are you going to sit here on your backsides? Chucking your guns away at the sight of a couple of men! I'll report you."

"The barn's full of Spartacists," they heard one of the soldiers say.

"Come on, get the machine gun," bawled the leader. He pushed forward and looked across towards the barn. Kreusat saw his coarse, bloated face and took aim.

Ping! The bullet ripped off a piece of the wall. "Damn!" exclaimed Kreusat, "a few inches lower and I'd have got him."

The soldiers did not expose themselves further, but the leader again ordered them to fetch a machine gun and more men.

"What shall we do now?" asked Franz, and looked at Murr. "If we stay here, we're for it. Come on, let's slip out again at the back through the hole."

They fired a few shots at the corner of the house, and made their way back to the hole. Murr pushed the planks noiselessly apart, crept through, held the place open till Franz had crept out, and peered for a moment in the direction of the yard and then towards the wood.

"Let's go," he whispered, and they slipped through the bushes, deeper into the wood.

Ping! A shot rang out from the direction of the buildings. They stopped. "Have they spotted us?" asked Franz in terror.

"They're firing at the barn," Murr laughed maliciously. "You see how funky the curs are."

They went wearily on. Their clothes were in tatters, and their hands torn and bloodstained from the thorny undergrowth. "Let's get a bit further," urged Murr, anxious to get away from the dangerous neighbourhood of the peasant's house. Far behind them—they had been over an hour

crawling through the undergrowth—rattled a machine gun.

"Do you hear that?" Franz asked his companion. "Let 'em shoot! Brave lads! It's too late now," replied Murr sarcastically. Two hours later they found a few wood-stacks and crawled into them to rest; Franz fell asleep at once.

Murr could not rest. After a few minutes' breathing space he settled down to keep watch on the bushes round them. Franz slept a long time, and twilight was already coming on when Murr woke him.

"We must go on before it gets dark," said Murr. There was no danger of fog; a strong wind had risen and was driving black scudding clouds before it over the trees.

The sleep had refreshed Kreusat. They took their guns and crept forward again, but there was no longer any need to advance so cautiously; they saw nothing more of the Noskerites.

"God, it's good to be alive," said Franz. "You don't die as easy as all that," said Murr, "even if the Noskerites are at your throat!"

"If only we knew where we were," said Franz after a pause. "They're a long way behind—we're all right now."

CHAPTER XVIII

AFTER they had wandered about for an hour Franz stopped. "Look, railway lines!" He pointed in front of him. "The Wesel railway," Murr agreed.

Murr lay down and tried to get his bearings. "Wesel lies on our left. We must bear to the right if we want to reach the front," he said.

They talked it over behind a bush. In the dusk Murr, with his Westphalian accent, might be taken for an agricultural worker. He left his rifle behind on the railway embankment so that it should not betray him, broke off a tough sapling and trimmed it with his knife.

"Come on," he said. "I'll go in front and you follow with your gun." They could not see far in front of them as night was falling, so they had to depend on their hearing.

"If we meet a Noskerite I'll brain him," said Murr, and started off. Franz followed, his gun under his right arm. He could feel his heart beating, and clenched his teeth. The same thought was uppermost in their minds : "Either way, we're lost. We won't give up."

Isolated shots rang out in front of them. The blood rushed to Franz's head and hammered against his temples. If the Noskerites had outposts, then they were in a very unhealthy spot. They must inevitably be noticed and stopped.

But they knew no other way out than along the railway, so they went on, trusting to luck. The shots which rang out here and there seemed to grow louder. Franz's limbs trembled with excitement. Murr did not stop, but plodded doggedly forward. To Franz there was something uncanny in the calmness with which he advanced. Then suddenly

he stopped as if glued to the spot. "Halt, who goes there?" a voice called out in front of him. Franz stared through the darkness; then he heard the sentry shout again:

"Halt, where are you going?"

"To Dorsten," replied Murr in a surly voice.

"You can't do that: the reds are over there."

"Hell! How shall I get there?" grumbled Murr.

"There's a cordon here," said the sentry; "you may stop a bullet if you go on this way."

Franz ducked. He heard a smashing blow followed by a groan. "Come on!" shouted Murr and seized the rifle from the stupefied soldier. He bounded off over the field, Franz, with only a vague idea as yet as what was happening, behind him.

The soldier came to and began to yell: "Spartacists, Spartacists!" Shots flashed in front of them as they fled. "There are our men!" cried Murr. "Come on, let's get to them!" They turned, leapt up again and rushed forward through a hail of bullets.

"Lie down," shrieked Franz Kreusat. "Forward, come on!" urged Murr desperately. Behind them a machine gun rattled. They threw themselves to the ground. The yells of the Noskerites pursued them, and again they raced for life.

As they ran a bullet struck Murr in his left side and he fell. Franz tried to drag him up, but Murr collapsed groaning.

"What's the matter?" cried Franz, and shook him in terror. "Leave me alone, Franz," groaned Murr. "Get on as fast as you can!"

With all his remaining strength—and the danger lent him almost superhuman power—Kreusat raised Murr up and staggered forward with the heavy body in his arms.

Rifles were still blazing in front of him. "Stop, don't shoot! don't shoot, comrades," he yelled hoarsely.

He stumbled, tottered forward, and collapsed in the

centre⁷ of a group of men. He sank into an abyss, deeper and deeper, as if in the grasp of a rushing whirlpool which sucked him down and then forced him again to the surface. Vaguely he realized where he was—in the camp of the Spartacists.

"Why, lad, you fainted!" said one of the workers and helped him to his feet.

Franz only heard half of what he was saying; his eyes were riveted on a body which lay stretched out on the ground a few yards away from him, covered with a coat. It was Murr. "Dead?" he asked. One of the workers nodded. "Dead."

CHAPTER XIX

F RANZ KREUSAT reached Dorsten that night in a completely exhausted condition. They put him in a smoke-filled malodorous room full of wounded and weary men. The loss of his comrade lay like a stone on his heart ; thoughts of the dead man would not let him sleep, in spite of his fatigue. It was not till early morning that he was able to close his eyes, and soon he was awoken by a tumult in the room.

"Come on ! hurry up ! out of this !" shouted a sailor who was standing at the door.

"What the hell's up ?" asked the men, and their dirty hands reached out, as by instinct, for the guns lying beside them.

"The Noskerites are coming !" cried the sailor.

"The Noskerites ! Blast 'em !" The men roused themselves and stared at the sailor.

"Come on, don't go to sleep again ! Get out and scatter, get the machine guns and keep the roads," he continued excitedly. The workers rushed hither and thither, colliding with one another and swearing, but they dragged the machine guns out and over the fields.

A number of men had climbed into a lorry in their panic. "What are you doing ?" cried the sailor. "Come down out of that ; that lorry's not leaving here."

The men cursed and got down. A courier came running up, covered with mud and sweat ; as he ran he yelled : "Look out ! the cavalry are coming !"

The sailor shouted the order to fire, and from houses, hedges and ditches guns began to speak. Kreusat and

some of the men had got out a machine gun and brought it into position on the right-hand side of the road.

The cavalry detachment turned and disappeared ; here and there parties of Noskerites rushed from their cover behind the bushes, but retreated before the workers' fire.

The waiting lorries were filled with women and wounded, and then went off at top speed. "When the wounded are away, get into groups again," said the sailor ; and passed the word through : "We mustn't get surrounded."

Six or eight Noskerites approached the rear of the machine-gun sections on the right side of the road. Kreusat noticed them in time, turned his gun and trained it on the soldiers. They threw themselves to the ground and crawled back, all but one, who remained obstinately where he was. Franz fired a couple of rounds at him.

"He's done in," said one of the section.

"Come on out of this, we'll be surrounded," called another worker from the road.

The section waited a little longer, but there were no more signs of the Noskerites. "Pack up the gun and retire," ordered Franz.

It was not easy going ; the furrows in the ploughed field were frozen, and the section stumbled wearily along. Suddenly a shell howled over their heads. Crash ! it exploded in the field a hundred yards in front of them ; a rain of mud descended on them as they threw themselves to the ground.

"Heavy artillery !" shouted one man, and hurried towards the road, but just then a second shell exploded with a deafening din barely ten yards away.

"The devils want to cut us off," shouted the men. They advanced at a hurried trot, panting and sweating under their heavy equipment.

On all sides groups of heavily-laden men were stumbling back ; here and there machine guns were rattling, while on the road a motor was blazing—it had broken down and the driver had set fire to it. Other cars rushed by, full of

nurses and wounded, and limping men dragged themselves along the road. The workers waved their hands in greeting, swore and sang. In spite of their danger, they still laughed and exchanged coarse jests.

"Now we're going to storm Essen again! This is only a strategic withdrawal," remarked a man with his arm in bloodstained bandages sarcastically. "That's official, from Hindenburg!"

More shells whistled over and exploded in the fields, and the men were covered with dirt.

"Take cover! they're coming!" "Ready, fire!"

So it went on every few minutes. In this way they reached the canal.

CHAPTER XX

ON March 25th a conference of the Executive Council of the Rhineland and Westphalia was held at Essen. From many workshops and hundreds of districts the revolutionary councils hastened to take part in the conference. The principal question was the settlement reached by the Bielefeld people, which meant giving up the revolutionary struggle.

Since the Ruhr region had as yet waited in vain for a simultaneous rising of the rest of the working class of the Empire, it had been resolved to elect a Central Council with authority to enter upon fresh negotiations with the Government.

The Council, forced by the necessity of defending the workers, who, through the confusion caused by rumours of a truce, had been checked and driven back in various sectors, had at once turned to the Government demanding fresh negotiations.

The Government's reply was in the form of an ultimatum : (1) Unqualified recognition of the constitutional state authority ; (2) restitution of the state organs of administration and public safety, so far as this did not involve actual intervention on behalf of the Kapp and Lüttwitz Government ; (3) the immediate disbanding of the red army ; (4) complete disarmament of the people, including the special constables, under the superintendence of a lawful state authority ; (5) immediate release of all prisoners. If these conditions were fulfilled, no attack would take place ; if they refused the representatives of the executive power would receive authority to take any necessary measures for the restoration of normal conditions. This was signed by

Müller, the Imperial Chancellor, and Dr. Gessler, the Minister of Defence for the Imperial Government.

The Central Council protested, and deliberated over the Bielefeld settlement. The commander of the Reichswehr troops in the Rhineland, General Watter, replied to their protest with a yet more outrageous ultimatum.

General Watter, who before the rising of the Ruhr workers had openly declared for Kapp and Lüttwitz, had now been appointed chief executive officer of the constitutional administration. He demanded that by the 30th of March there must be surrendered: Four heavy and ten light field guns, two hundred machine guns, sixteen trench mortars, twenty thousand rifles, four hundred artillery shells, six hundred trench mortar shells, and a hundred thousands round of rifle ammunition. But on March 30th a part of the red army was still under arms and so his conditions were not fulfilled.

The news of these demands raised a storm of indignation amongst the workers, and the newspapers and posters publishing them were seized and torn to shreds.

Red army men returning from the front spat with hatred on the notices which were displayed by various authorities who had taken their acceptance for granted, disregarding the Executive Council. They called together the people surrounding the notice boards and told them of the strenuous fighting and tremendous sacrifices of the armed workers at the front. In their emotion they wanted to seize all the available weapons and rush to the threatened front line.

In Koppstadt Square a man stood on the plinth of the memorial and spoke with a hoarse yet stirring voice: "Why have we risen, comrades? Why did we take up arms? Not at the bidding of Ebert and his government, who have now delivered us over to that bloodhound Watter after we had helped them back to power by the general strike! We took up arms to free ourselves from all our oppressors. Comrades, the Watter ultimatum means the

end of our rising. If we surrender our guns, then thousands of our best men will fall into the claws of those brutes. If we give in now, fellow workers, then we shall be the slaves of the capitalists for centuries. Comrades, in the name of the men who are bleeding for you, who have paid with their lives for every foot of Ruhr land which has been fought over, I call on you to take up your guns. Rise once again; the Ruhr has drunk the workers' blood; the Ruhr belongs to the revolutionary workers."

Amid roars of applause the mud-stained orator was hoisted on the shoulders of the crowd and carried through the streets. A procession of demonstrators was formed; a blood-red flag fluttered at the head of the procession. "Long live the Dictatorship of the Proletariat!" yelled the crowd, and marched through the streets to the Town Hall. There hundreds more proclaimed they were going to the front, and stormily called for "Guns!"

In a short time lorries left, laden with reinforcements. New life animated those staying behind, new hope sprang up in the hearts of the wounded and war-weary men returning home in despair, who tottered into the rest billets, almost beaten physically and mentally. The Central Council also declared the demands of General Watter to be outrageous and insane and called for a fresh general strike on March 29th.

The miners who had gone sullenly back to the pits several days before shouted to one another: "General Strike! A General Strike!" Deep down in the mine the alarm rumbled and roused the hewer at the seam, the haulier in the galleries, on the braking incline, at the slag heaps.

"General Strike!" "Out of the pit!" "Not a wheel shall turn!" The masses marched to the gates of the colliery and kept out those workers who were still hesitating. They then went to the foundries and brought out their fellow workers.

CHAPTER XXI

J UPP ZERMACK had attended the conference of Executive Councils along with the district representative, Mahler. The attitude of the right wing of the Independent Social Democrats had made him furious.

"Any blockhead could see what they want," he said to Mahler, who was sitting beside him. "Perhaps it would be wiser if we were to give up the struggle," replied Mahler in a despondent tone; "the Bielefeld arrangements still give us some advantages."

"Kicks, you mean," growled Zermack, who was realizing more and more clearly that Mahler was weakening and had apparently lost all his courage. "Are you blind and deaf? The whole idea of the truce and settlement is only a plant to get our guns so as to pay us out quicker."

Mahler, who was usually very positive and inclined to stick to any opinion he had formed, had a profound respect for the stalwart hewer. "We could have a try," he muttered peevishly; "we can't go on quarrelling among ourselves for ever."

"Try what?"

"Try for a settlement."

"Not a cartridge shall be given up, not a gun!" roared Zermack.

They were not the only ones arguing this point. At many tables a clash of opinions was in progress. The struggle was carried into the local Executive Councils, and here, too, many different viewpoints and opinions were represented.

For days the dispute continued, but on March 29th, when the general strike was called again, the war of opinions

partially died down, and Mahler himself declared his readiness to bring the miners out from the pits.

Then there was life again in the office of the Executive Council. Couriers came and went ; cyclists flashed along the neighbouring streets ; lorries full of armed men sped along amid loud cheers, to help the exhausted workers at the front, which was again yielding under heavy pressure.

It seemed as if all had changed again. Even Mahler became more cheerful and no longer spoke of disarming, and himself helped to equip the contingents and find leaders for them. He even took a gun and undertook the policing of the streets, for looting had occurred here and there, and the tradespeople had asked for protection.

On March 31st a metal-worker who appeared at the offices of the Executive Council reported that the technical staff of the Nölle Works refused to come out.

“ Chase ‘em out with guns,” said Zermack.

He sent off two army men with the metal-worker. They were joyfully received by the strikers in the iron hall. “ Fetch them down, lads ; that’s the crowd we want out, up there.”

“ Drive ‘em out ! ” The drawing office staff, who were working at full speed, held out no longer when they saw the pistols threatening them. They collected their materials, took off their white overalls and left the office in terror.

The only one who resisted was the works manager, who got very excited and shouted, “ I shall lodge a complaint ! ”

“ You can do what you like about that when we’re ready,” replied one of the men.

In Stoppenberg a crowd of workers assembled outside the Town Hall. In the midst of these stood Jacob Trauten, making a speech. “ It’s a crime, comrades. The Government is making every endeavour to restore normal conditions ; it definitely assures you this time of socialization, an eight-hour day in the iron industry, and a six-hour shift in the pit, but the Spartacists are hounding the workers

on to fresh bloodshed. Every intelligent worker who is clear about the irresponsibility of the Spartacists . . .”

A stalwart hand grabbed the speaker by the collar. “ Hold your jaw, Jacob, or you’ll get something in it ; clear off or there’ll be trouble.” Amid the jeers of the miners Trauten was pushed down and jostled against the Town Hall.

Jupp Zermack, who had shoved Trauten from the group, now sprang up the stone steps and cried : “ Criticism won’t help, comrades. What the Government promises us now it could have done before the rising, it had plenty of chances. It isn’t socialization that will go on in the Ruhr ; Watter’s Reichswehr lot will want to pay us out for the knocks they’ve got there the last few days, and if we’re fools enough to give up our guns they’ll smash us to hell. We’ve talked enough now, comrades. There are still rifles at the police station ; get them and go and help the lads at the front. One more effort ; grit your teeth and go for ‘em. . . .”

There were repeated cries of “ Hear, hear ! ” Zermack’s words had again roused the miners’ enthusiasm.

CHAPTER XXII

THE grey, oily waters of the canal rippled sluggishly. Franz Kreusat lay, with some of the red army men, in a hollow behind his machine gun ; the Noskerites were on the other bank, firing from houses and other places where there was good cover. Kreusat also fired, but sparingly, for they were short of ammunition. He only fired when soldiers exposed themselves and made a good target. The word had been passed along, "Don't waste your shots ; the ammunition's getting low."

From the other side of the canal guns rattled ; shells exploded in the fields, and again and again the machine-gun crew were spattered with mud.

"Let's look for better cover," said Kreusat. They dragged the gun over the damp, heavy soil, sinking deeper and deeper into the mud.

"What's the use of carrying on any longer ?" one of them grumbled and looked longingly towards the town behind them, to which they had looked in vain for assistance.

In the city everything was in a state of complete dissolution. Guns were being hastily surrendered and men discharged. Instead of reinforcements, the Executive Council sent the fighting men the bitter news that the struggle would have to be abandoned.

Bells were ringing. "Easter !" jeered an old fighter ; "the bosses are celebrating their redemption !"

"They're dressing up their saviours with flowers already," said another, whose face was disfigured by a cut and smears of blood. The men were gloomy and grumbled,

but they did not leave their posts and maintained a stout defence.

"Let's give it up," lamented a haulier; "there's only a handful of us left."

"No," said Kreusat, "we must stay here; thousands in the city will be threatened if they get across the canal."

"We can't save anyone now," argued the haulier; "we shall be swamped."

"We *must* hold back the Noskerites," repeated Franz obstinately. The men lay down again and continued firing.

"We've no more ammunition," said a young worker, pointing to what was left.

"Go over to the others," said Franz; "perhaps they've got some to spare."

The youth crawled round from group to group imploring them, "Comrades, we've no more ammunition; can you give us some?"

"We've no more ourselves," was the reply.

"Just one box, half a belt, if there's any going!"

They cut a belt in two and divided it between them. Beaming with satisfaction, the youth crawled back and called out, "I've got some!"

They fired yet more sparingly. From the other side of the canal the Reichswehr machine guns kept up a continuous fire; they had no need to economize.

"Have you got a sapper among you?" a man with his clothes covered with mud crawled up and asked Kreusat's crew. They were busy bandaging a comrade who had got a bullet wound in the neck.

"He won't last much longer!" said one of them, pointing to the yellow, bloodless face of the wounded man.

"Get two men to take him away," ordered the newcomer, "and the rest of you get along to Old Essen Bridge; it's got to be blown up."

"And the gun?" asked Franz.

"Put a bomb in it." They blew up the machine gun and, keeping low, ran rapidly over the field.

"Now it's all up," said a grey-haired man with a weather-beaten face as they ran. "But those swine shall go down with the bridge."

After an exhausting run they drew near the bridge, and found that there were still some red army men there. They at once procured dynamite from a neighbouring pit and crawled to the bridge with it; half a dozen men were on the job.

Like a cluster of grapes their bodies hung over the bubbling water, their frozen fingers gripping the iron stanchions. They rammed charge after charge into the holes and crevices of the stone and concrete pillars. Shells exploded over the houses a little way behind the bridge, and pieces of tiling, stones and mud were flung up and rattled down on to the bridge. One of the Noskerite machine guns opened fire; bullets hammered against the iron, chipped the stonework, ricochetted into the air or splashed into the water. The sappers were frightened and hesitated.

"Don't get rattled," urged the man in command. He was one of the most assiduous workers and they listened to him. The charges were rammed home and fuse-wires connected.

"Come on out!" ordered the leader. The machine gun was shooting so low that they had difficulty in withdrawing. A fine rain was falling. As they crept back they unrolled the wire and connected it to the firing battery.

"Duck down!" called the leader.

They crouched down in the furrows. He switched on the current; nothing happened. He switched on again with a jerk, as he used to do in the pit when a charge would not act. Still no result.

"Something wrong," he said; "go and have another look at it." Two men cursed and crawled along the un-wound wire as far as the bridge.

Kreusat, who had raised himself a little, received a bullet in the stomach. He clutched his body and threw himself down again. A maddening pain shot through him ; he writhed. The pain became unbearable and he began to groan, then he bellowed.

"What's the matter ?" asked the leader and looked anxiously at the bridge. A darkness came over Franz Kreusat. He bit his lips in pain and clutched his body with trembling hands. His hands became sticky, he felt a spongy lump there.

"Ready !" He heard the cry as from very far away. Then : "Lie down !" Through a grey mist he saw the shadows of the men creeping back, then an explosion shook the earth.

"The bridge has gone !" shouted the men. Franz's eyes and mouth strained ; he tried to speak to the comrades who now gathered round him. He stretched himself out. . . .

"A bullet's torn his stomach," said a man, and covered Franz Kreusat with a cloak. Then they took their guns and sought cover in the furrows. Fresh peals of bells broke out in the city.

It was Easter Sunday. In the town groups of pale-faced men were standing, looking fearfully in the direction of the canal, from which the explosions of the Reichswehr shells were still audible. The shops were closed, shuttered with iron bars and bolted, for there was danger of them being looted.

Middle-class citizens mingled with the excited workers, listening to their talk and asking questions. With malicious joy they looked over towards the canal. "The Reichswehr are there !" they whispered.

Not all were cheerful ; some were alarmed lest the town should be shelled. "No fear," jeered a miner, "at the worst they'll only shell our hovels, like they did at Essen."

Red army men came from Cattlemarket Street and brought

bad news. "The Noskerites are in Bottrop"; "They're smashing everything that smells red to them."

"Don't stand staring here!" yelled a wounded Spartacist. "Get some guns and go and help those poor devils or they'll be done in."

He crouched on the stone step and sobbed. People crowded round him. Among the pale and anxious faces were some which had never known privation, faces of prosperous citizens.

"What's the matter with him? Is he drunk?"

"Don't talk rot, you ass! He's come from the canal; he's wounded." "Oh!"

"When will those people learn sense?" said a well-dressed woman, who went pale at the sight of the blood-stained miner.

"Silly bitch!" growled a working woman.

"What the hell are you staring at?" shouted the wounded man angrily. "Ain't I good enough for you, eh? I have been eight days in the thick of it. I wish I'd died there! We're hunted like dogs now."

He shouted this at the better-dressed people, who looked uncomfortable. The Spartacist stood up. "You're glad?" He gripped his gun with both hands. "Surrender our guns? There, there, and *there!*" He dashed it against the stone wall of the house again and again; it bent, cracked and smashed to splinters.

"There, you won't get mine!"

"Jesus and Mary save us!" screamed one of the women.

"Shut up!" roared the Spartacist. "To-morrow you'll be cheering when Watter puts the workers against the wall and shoots 'em. Get out!"

The crowd dispersed. The faces of the workers were gloomy, and those of the bourgeoisie terrified. Casting a look of hatred at them, the wounded Spartacist limped away.

CHAPTER XXIII

THE city took down its red flags and veiled itself in mourning ; the red army, whose last despairing resistance at the canal had been overcome, broke up completely and the men streamed back into the mining districts.

In spite of the efforts of the revolutionary Central Council in Essen, the break-up of the workers' front line, which for days had held out so heroically, could no longer be arrested, since the demoralizing forces which had got partial control of the leadership, supported by the threats and promises of the Government, were active everywhere and were accelerating the dissolution wherever possible.

Partly as the result of bribes from the anti-revolutionary elements, partly from sheer greed, a gang of criminals, taking advantage of the confusion, forced their way into the shops and began looting in the name of the Spartacists. The last of the red army men, angry and mortified, marched through the streets and smashed their guns, or banded together to take vengeance on the ruffians who were plundering the people.

"The Reds are smashing the windows again at Kramer's and Mermann's," yelled the crowd.

A small contingent of red soldiers went there ; but the looters escaped heavily laden with plunder.

"Halt ! Stop !" A band of workers ran up the Limbeckerstrasse.

The looters ran into the side streets, but the exasperated men caught them. "What are you doing with those things ?"

"We had authorizations," stuttered the ruffians.

"Who from?"

"From the Executive Council."

"Come on, we'll go along to the Executive Council with you." The looters hesitated, looked at one another uncertainly. At that moment a couple of shots rang out in the Limbeckerstrasse; the workers' guard there had fired when a second gang came up and would not halt when challenged.

The red army men seized the hesitating bandits by their collars and took them off to the Town Hall. Here there was terrific excitement, for messengers had brought the news that the Reichswehr were approaching.

Then the rest of the workers, who were now in considerable danger, fled after the others to the mining districts.

"We will come back again," the townspeople heard the fugitives shouting. "We'll come back again, but there'll be no more negotiating then!"

The armoured cars of the Reichswehr were forming a ring round the municipal buildings. Machine guns were trained on the street corners, where curious crowds had gathered.

In Cattlemarket Street there was a large crowd.

"What's up?"

"The Noskerites are taking people away."

"One's had his face smashed in, and another could hardly walk," a woman told them excitedly. "The soldiers were kicking him."

A second woman began to cry. "Oh dear, my husband's somewhere out there too. I don't know where he is. If only he isn't . . ."

Frau Kreusat, who was standing in the crowd, heard them talking about the prisoners. She pushed her way through to those who had seen the Spartacists being led away and asked, trembling, "Who was it? What were they like?"

"There was a young one and an older one."

"Was the young one tall?" asked Frau Kreusat, her

eyes almost starting from her head. "Was he as tall as that?" She raised her hand above her head to show how tall Franz was.

"No, he was a little fellow." "Then it wasn't my boy," cried Frau Kreusat with relief. "My son's been out with them from the very first, you know," she told them.

She went to the Town Hall to see better what was happening. There she crept round and kept a sharp watch when the Noskerites brought workers in.

"Go away, you!" shouted a sentry roughly. She stepped back a little and then stood still again.

"Clear off," shouted the sentry, "or I'll take you in there!" He pointed with the muzzle of his gun towards the court of the Town Hall, where the prisoners were being collected.

"I'm looking for my boy," said Frau Kreusat, with a despairing glance at the soldier. "Isn't there a tall one there, as tall as this?" With a shaking hand she indicated the height of her son. "A boy with very bushy hair?" she implored.

"If he's there, he'll get what's coming to him," said the sentry roughly. "Go on, get out, you old cow!" said he, threatening her with his gun.

She went home in despair. "I haven't found him," she moaned to Martin, who was awaiting her anxiously.

"He'll come back yet," he comforted her, though he himself no longer believed it possible.

"And if anything has happened to him?"

"What could happen to him? Don't be so silly."

"He is our last, Martin. . . ."

"Franz didn't go alone."

"And if he never comes back again?"

There was a terrible query in his wife's eyes. Martin had no answer to give her. He went unnaturally red and began to cough.

In spite of his weak chest, Martin Kreusat had become an entirely different man these last days. He forced

himself to walk with an almost upright carriage ; everyone should see that his Franz was at the front. He let everyone know what he thought of those who stayed at home and did not go with the red army like his boy.

" Why do you hang round here when you are more needed out there ? " Martin asked the young colliers. " My boy would be ashamed to stick on here. It's a pity I can't do anything now or I'd soon show you . . . "

He went off to the police station to see what he could do. " Can't I help you a bit, boys ? " he asked there too.

" You, Martin ! " Martin was mortified. " I have my Franz out there too, you know," he said, and then was seized with a fit of coughing.

" That's grand, Martin. That's enough, comrade ; you go home and have a rest."

" I haven't strength enough to shoulder a gun, but I could go on sentry duty or something."

" All right, Martin, that's all right ; your Franz is doing your bit for you." Martin gave a hoarse laugh. He coughed and said proudly, " Yes, he's an example to all of them. He was scarcely out of quod before he'd cocked his gun over his shoulder and gone off. You should hear my old woman. She'll go crazy if the boy doesn't come back."

CHAPTER XXIV

THE Reichswehr returned during the night. They arrived at the very moment that Zermack and Raup had taken over the patrolling of the streets. They were both on the Essen Road when the Noskerite motors hooted. The startled miners just saved themselves in the nick of time behind a hoarding ; fortunately the street lamps were extinguished.

They pressed themselves flat against the hoarding till the lorries were past.

" My God ! " said Raup, trembling with excitement. " We were in luck that time."

They ran to the police station. " Take your guns and get away," Zermack called to the sentries.

Another day dawned. This morning nothing was to be seen in the district but grey uniforms, steel helmets, and squads of cavalry galloping over the fields and patrols in the streets, going from house to house.

One of these patrols went to Raup's house and turned everything upside down.

" Where is your husband ? " the N.C.O. asked Frau Raup.

" I don't know," she replied, her knees trembling.

" We'll soon find him," said the N.C.O. in a threatening voice. " Then he'll take a walk to the wall." He turned to the waiting soldiers. " Go on, search for him."

The Noskerites threw the furniture about, looked in the beds and in the drying loft. They even searched the cellar and prodded the heaps of coal with their bayonets.

" Where's he hiding ? " roared the sergeant to Frau Raup, who had to go all over the house with them.

"I don't know."

"You're lying. We'll take you with us if you won't say."

"You can do what you like; I don't know where my husband is."

"You shall tell us the truth," stormed the man and gave her a push in the chest. She staggered, and the children began to scream loudly.

"Quiet, children, they won't do anything to Dad," Frau Raup reassured them, and stood there unflinching.

"You can be certain we'll get him, and *then* we'll give him 'Executive Council.'

She remained calm. "Go on looking for him if you like."

Baffled, the soldiers left Raup's house. As soon as they had gone, she went into a corner, pulled up her skirt and untied the army pistols bound to her body. She wrapped these up in a few rags and unostentatiously left the house. She went straight to a pond and threw the pistols and a bag of cartridges into the water.

"So that's that," said Frau Raup contentedly. "They're better in there. Now that band of murderers won't get one bullet back!"

Frau Naumann, who was just coming back from delivering newspapers, noticed a Reichswehr patrol standing in the street, the leader of which was scanning a list. "Josef Zermack," said the sergeant aloud.

"Holy Jesus, they want to get Zermack!" Frau Naumann clutched her breast in sudden terror. Then she ran, as only a woman of her stoutness could run. All out of breath, she came to Zermack's house.

"Frau Zermack! come out! They're coming!" Frau Naumann hammered at the closed door.

The stout little woman came out of the bedroom, where she had already been sitting for hours on guard before the window, because Jupp had gone to bed, dead tired.

"What is it?" she asked, gaping.

"The Noskerites are after your husband."

"Who?"

"Eh, are you daft, woman? The Noskerites! Quick, warn him."

"Good God!" Frau Zermack could not get into the bedroom quickly enough. "Jupp!" she pulled the bed-clothes off her husband with one tug. "Jupp, the Noskerites are after you!"

Jupp sprang out of the bed, and stared at the two women.

"Now, don't go to sleep, man," shouted Frau Naumann. "Get out and hide yourself, you fool."

"Bosh!" grumbled Jupp Zermack and stood undecided by the bed.

"Downstairs," ordered Frau Naumann. She dragged him down the stairs and pushed him into the first floor flat.

The woman in the flat screamed. "My God, what is it?"

"Hold your tongue, Fanny; the Noskerites are after Zermack, so just shut your mouth." She pushed Jupp, who seemed still half stupefied, into the room. "Don't you let them know where you are," she said sternly, and shut the door.

They listened to the noises from the street, where the measured tread of the soldiers was audible. "I wish they'd break their necks, the swine," said the stout woman, and pressed her heavy body against the door to hear what the soldiers were saying.

"If only they don't come in here," trembled Fanny. "You're all right; every dog in Dörp knows that you've had nothing to do with the Spartacists," Frau Naumann calmed her. "Look out, now the fun's beginning," she continued in a whisper.

"Where is your husband?" they heard the harsh voice of the sergeant saying on the next floor.

"What do you want with my husband?" replied Frau Zermack fearlessly.

"Where is your husband, I'm asking you?" said the man sullenly.

Frau Zermack also got hostile. "Sitting on his

backside. What do you want with my husband ? " she said.

Frau Naumann heard a shriek and then Frau Zermack's voice again : " What, you'd hit a defenceless woman, you cowards ! But that's all you can do. Clear off, or I'll set about you. A whole squadron of you come to arrest one man ! "

The N.C.O. swore, and another scream came from upstairs. Jupp Zermack heard it too and banged on the door. " Be quiet, man," Frau Naumann warned him, " your old woman can deal with them all right on her own."

" Cowards ! " shouted the woman upstairs. " What do you want with my husband ? He doesn't bother his head about you. He's in the works at Schiemann's ; do you think he wants to run away from you ? "

The soldiers searched the flat at the bidding of their leader. Frau Naumann heard them clattering about. Then they came down the stairs. Frau Naumann ran to the window and looked out from behind the curtains ; the soldiers were marching quickly towards the works.

" Out you go and get away quick," she shouted, and drew Jupp out of the room, while Frau Zermack came down from the next floor.

Jupp appeared with a flushed, angry face. " What did they do to you ? " he asked his wife hoarsely.

" Nothing, Jupp ; I defended myself all right," said the little woman reassuringly as she stroked his broad back tenderly with one hand.

" You must make yourself scarce," said Frau Naumann. " The brutes will be back again, and then there'll be a row."

Zermack did not like the idea of this ; flight seemed cowardly to him. " You could eat a few of them alive," said his wife, " but too many of them come at once. Go on, Jupp, clear out," she urged him.

" And you ? " he asked anxiously.

" I'm not afraid, Jupp. What can they do to me ? "

" We'll see to them," said Frau Naumann. " Quick,

we've no time to stand talking here!" She reached down the hat and coat of the owner of the flat and made Zermack put them on. "Come with me across the yard; I know a safe place to get out."

She knew each yard and every hole in every fence. She led him along, pushed him through when he hesitated, and said, "Hurry up or they'll kill you. Those Noskerites won't spare one of you."

They found themselves eventually in the open country. Frau Naumann had led him out of danger cleverly enough. "Don't you worry about your wife," she said, "I'll take care of her. I'm only an ignorant woman, but I'd sooner see the landlord shot than you. You only did what every decent man who can't get enough to eat knows is right." She pressed his hand roughly. "You shan't all be killed, in spite of their bayonets."

Towards evening the three men met in the Mühlenkuhle. Frau Naumann had taken on the dangerous task of warning Raup and Mahler. The latter had already gone when the Noskerites got their warrants for searching his house and arresting him, having been warned by a civil servant at the Town Hall.

"Now we'll be hunted," growled Mahler. "That's your truce," Zermack replied with bitter sarcasm. He looked over towards the noisy city.

Clouds of smoke hung heavily in the air and veiled the ironworks with a thick curtain. Engines shrieked from the pits; the huge cable pulleys seemed to revolve even more swiftly than before, bringing up the cages loaded with coal and with men to the light of day, and then rushing again into the depths.

The shrill shriek of the cranes mingled with the heavy thud of the steam hammer striking the glowing blocks of iron. Black and yellow smoke rose from every chimney, and on the horizon blazed the furnaces, the life-blood of the steel and coal district of the Ruhr!

"Now they are slaving again with machine guns trained

on them!" said Raup bitterly, "and we must fly before the executioners, who are giving us bullets instead of our rights!"

"We shall return," said Zermack solemnly.

Mahler regarded him despondently. "Do you believe that?" he asked.

"Do I believe it?" Zermack raised himself to his full height, stretched his mighty limbs and waved his arm in the direction of the city. "Look at those giant furnaces; can they be extinguished by a breath? In the same way it is impossible to extinguish the ideals in our hearts. The thousand graves of the rebels of the Red Ruhr will be like signposts to the battalions which we will form again. Comrade, the proletariat will one day again take up arms and make the wheels stand still. Then there will be no truce. We'll throw the 'peace' talkers into the Ruhr to shut their mouths, and our guns shall do the speaking . . . our guns!"

NOTE FOR THE ENGLISH EDITION

As the tide of class struggle rises again in Germany to fresh revolutionary battles, English readers will find Hans Marchwitza's novel, "Storm Over the Ruhr," of breathless interest.

It tells the story of the resistance of the Ruhr miners and metal-workers to the Kapp-Lüttwitz attempt to seize power in Germany in the spring of 1920 by means of a militarist surprise attack. Kapp and Lüttwitz, aided by their bands of armed ex-officer thugs, managed to drive the Social-Democratic government from Berlin without difficulty, the regular army, the Reichswehr, playing a sympathetically "neutral" rôle.

But to seize the Government was one thing—to hold it another. The workers throughout Germany declared a complete general strike, which the Social-Democrats had to recognize and lead. At the same time the revolutionary workers, led by the German Communist Party (Spartacists) and the left wing of the Independent Socialist Party, raised the demand for the arming of the workers as a protection against the armed bands of the militarist bourgeoisie, against whom the Social-Democratic government of Ebert, Scheidemann and Noske had never taken any serious measures of disarmament.

The Kapp-Lüttwitz coup failed before the power of the General Strike, but was replaced by the equally reactionary Government of Dr. Künow. At the same time the Social-Democratic leaders of the trade unions called off the General Strike, and large forces of armed police (so-called

"Greens," or Security Police) and Reichswehr (Noskerites, from Noske, the name of the Social-Democratic Minister of Defence) were moved into the proletarian areas where the workers had armed themselves in self-defence and were refusing to call off the General Strike until their demands had been satisfied.

In the Ruhr and Central Germany the workers met this provocation by armed uprising and the formation of a Red Army to meet the invasion of the "Green" militarized Security Police and the Reichswehr.

The conduct and development of the bitter fight which ensued is vividly described in this novel. To the English reader, however, it may not be so clear why these stirring events were confined to only a small portion of Germany, and why the insurrection, which had the undoubted support of the majority of the workers, failed.

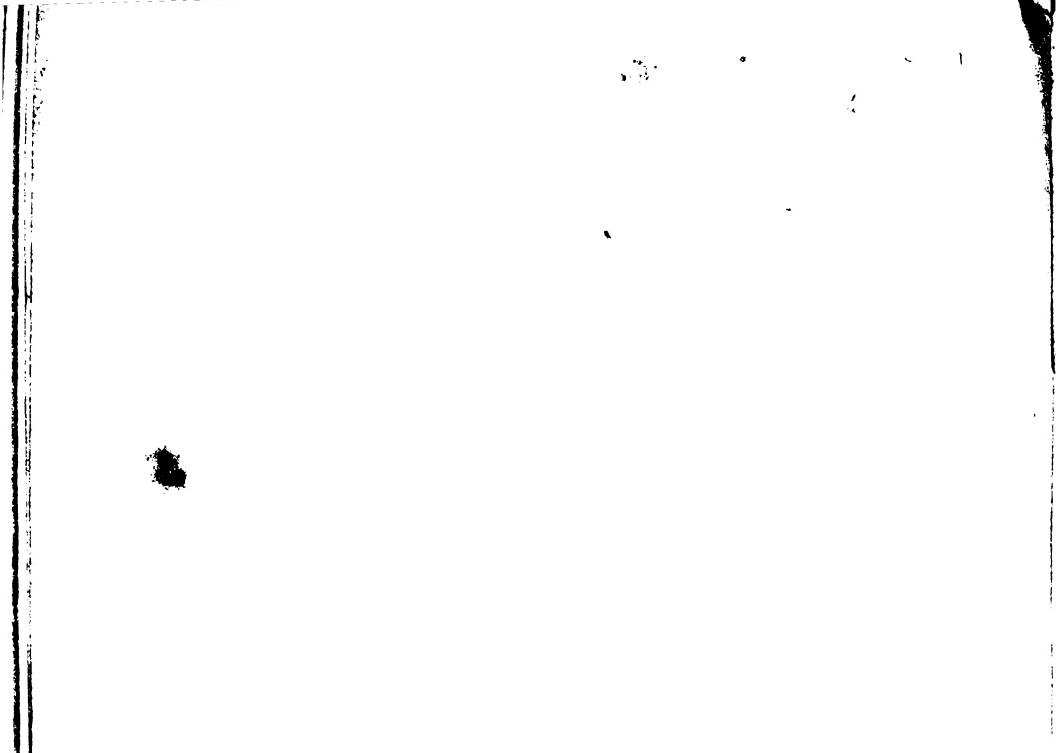
At this time there was no united revolutionary party of the German working class. There was the Communist Party, the former Spartacus League, founded by Karl Liebknecht and Rosa Luxemburg, with many sectarian traditions, and, though it had great prestige, without wide mass influence. The Independent Socialist Party, formed in 1915 by a split from the Social-Democratic Party over the question of support for the imperialist war, was divided in two. A minority, led by Kautsky and Hilferding, were in favour of reuniting with the Social-Democrats and entering the Second International. The working-class majority of the Party opposed this course, and were in favour of unity with the Communists. There also existed a syndicalist body known as the Communist Labour Party.

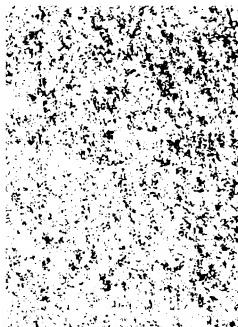
The lack of a unified revolutionary leadership, as well as the presence in the Young Communist Party of many non-revolutionary traditions, inherited from the days of the individual sway of the Social-Democratic Party in the German Labour movement, determined the failure of the insurrection. Aided by the leadership of the Social-Democratic Party, particularly by the well-hated Noske,

the German capitalists were able to re-establish their threatened domination.

(To help him in understanding the action of this novel, the reader should remember that the "Blues" referred to are the ordinary police, the "Greens" are the militarized Security Police, and the Reichswehr are the regular army.)

should be added to the following:





more advanced stage

than we have reached

here but in the same

sort of surroundings.

Thrilling, and a

proletarian novel,

but with lessons

for us today.



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